

RESEARCH STUDIES SERIES

The United States Air Force in Southeast Asia
CIVIC ACTION

By

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Air Force History and Museums Program

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PREFACE

This is the first in a series of research studies—historical works that were not published for various reasons. Yet, the material contained therein was deemed to be of enduring value to Air Force members and scholars. These works were minimally edited and printed in a limited edition to reach a small audience that may find them useful. We invite readers to provide feedback to the Air Force History and Museums Program.

Capt. Betty L. Barton Christiansen, a member of the staff in the Office of Air Force History, researched and wrote this volume. She begins by establishing a framework of the civic action concept. Chapter II discusses the period corresponding to the Kennedy administration, when both government and military officials grappled with adjusting to a "new kind of war," the origins of counterinsurgency strategy (of which civic action was a part), and the efforts to apply this strategy in Vietnam. The nation-building period discussed in Chapter III, covers the period from November 1963 to July 1965, a time of great instability in South Vietnam, and the myriad efforts by the USAF to establish unity. Although he had promised to continue the policies of President Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson began to "lean away" from political and other non-military solutions to the crisis in Vietnam. This was reflected in the attitudes of the various services toward unconventional warfare and civic action. By 1966, while military solutions occupied center stage, some stability had been established in Vietnam. More attention was being paid to winning popular allegiance and USAF's Seventh Air Force formally organized its civic action activities. However, just as the program showed signs of success, the Tet offensive intervened. Thus, Chapter V demonstrates that instead of serving as advisers to the Vietnamese, the USAF civic action effort was compelled to revert to an earlier phase of its development, when humanitarian services were emphasized. Still, the program recuperated completely by July 1968. In Chapter VI, the South Vietnamese government embarked on an accelerated pacification program to extend its control throughout the country. Civic action constituted one part of this effort. Seventh Air Force sought to improve training civic action personnel, increase the number of civic action officers "in country," and obtain more resources for the program. These refinements provided a better understanding of civic action and showed the benefits of increased South Vietnamese participation. By the end of 1968, pacification had become a major part of allied strategy in Vietnam. The results of the various changes in the civic action program are discussed and assessed.

Jacob Neufeld, General Editor
January 1998

CHAPTER I

THE GROWTH OF A CONCEPT

The new generation of military leaders has shown an increasing awareness that armies cannot only defend their countries—they can help to build them.

John F. Kennedy ¹

Military forces exist for the primary purpose of bringing both internal and external security to their respective countries. Of necessity they deal in the hardware of war: planes, bombs, tanks, and guns. Frontline troops are taught to kill. Soldiers are often idealized for their bravery and insensitivity at the scene of battle. With the aid of the mass media a stereotyped, dramatic image of the soldier in combat has emerged, with few giving him credit for more than bloodshed and destruction.

History is replete, however, with examples of armed forces engaging in constructive endeavors, contributing not only to better civil-military relationships but also to the progress and socioeconomic development of entire nations. These non-military activities, although not known until recently as "military civic action," are as old as warfare itself. Nehemiah ordered ancient Israelite warriors to carry a sword in one hand and their implements to rebuild Jerusalem in the other. As early as 300 B.C. Alexander the Great created the first military engineering units, rebuilding and modernizing many conquered Persian cities. The ancient Roman legionnaire, deviating from the common practice of pillage, exploitation, and suppression of conquered peoples, built roads, located and secured cities, and dug waterways. By introducing superior Roman agricultural methods, legal system, and engineering and mining techniques, the Roman military served as a civilizing force coincidental with its military conquests.² In more recent years, the engineering accomplishments of the British military were instrumental in transforming India and moving it into the modern era.

Likewise nineteenth-century Russian Czars used military engineers to construct the great Trans-Siberian railroad, and since 1919 the Soviet Union has often employed the technical skills and manpower reserves of the Red Army to accomplish such diverse tasks as harvesting crops and building roads.

Much the same was true in the United States where military civic action has a long tradition. The important role played by the armed forces in the development and expansion of the West is well-known. During the colonial period, a young militia officer, Col. George Washington, carried out surveying and mapping assignments for the civil government. Later, after independence had been gained, the American military engaged in numerous nation-building activities out of necessity for survival on the frontier, and as a result, encouraged the settlement of wilderness areas and stimulated the economic growth of the nation. Despite pessimistic warnings from settlers, frontier garrisons successfully introduced wheat to the prairie states to feed their troops. They brought in livestock herds to provide a regular beef ration. The Western lumber industry received its initial stimulus from sawmills erected to construct Army forts. The forts themselves became sites for many of the more prosperous Western and Midwestern cities. And military roads formed the basis for

the web of highways crisscrossing much of the nation today.³ In many areas Army doctors provided the only medical aid available to early settlements, and troop units stationed in sparsely populated areas often appeared as the only tangible manifestation of national authority.

Other civic activities on the part of the military resulted from a conscious nation-building effort on the part of the United States government. Prompted by military necessity and economic considerations, Congress and the Secretary of War assigned the armed forces a succession of construction and exploratory tasks. These missions ranged from the famous expedition of Capt. Meriwether Lewis and Lt. William Clark to the construction of forts and posts to protect settlers from Indian attacks and to guard trails leading into the country's hinterland. In 1810 the War Department, even while on the verge of war with England and France, directed Army elements to build a "wagon road" from Fort Hawkins on the Georgia frontier through Indian country into the Mississippi Territory.⁴ Several years after the War of 1812, Secretary of War John C. Calhoun noted that such civic actions had not only proved "highly useful for military operations" but also contributed directly to the "industry and political prosperity of the community."⁵

In the decade following the War of 1812, settlers flocked into territories east of the Mississippi. Since the U.S. military academy at West Point produced the nation's only civil engineers for several decades, the federal government relied almost exclusively upon military specialists for reconnoitering and survey work.⁶ The Engineering Corps cut trails through the forest and conducted surveys for the initial access roads as successive areas were opened for exploration and settlement. Later garrison troops made the necessary road improvements, drained swamps, bridged rivers and streams, and constructed canals to keep pace with the rapid internal growth of the nation. This was the case in opening the Washington Territory, New Mexico Territory, Kansas and Nebraska, and Utah.⁷ So great was the demand for civil engineers, President James Monroe asked Congress to increase the number of engineers on active duty, stating that "the more extensively these Corps are engaged in the improvement of their country....the happier the effect will be.... By profiting of their science the works will always be well executed, and by giving to the officers such employment our Union will derive all the advantage, in peace as well as in war, from their talents and services." He went on to note an additional advantage: "The military will be incorporated with the civil, and unfounded and injurious distinctions and prejudices of every kind be done away."⁸

Likewise, President John Quincy Adams envisioned extensive use of the Army Corps of Engineers to carry out his ambitious internal improvements program and oversaw the appointment of a Board of Engineers for Internal Improvements for that purpose.⁹

Throughout the remainder of the 1800s and into the twentieth century, American military forces added to their list of civil accomplishments. Engineers provided surveys and engineering help for construction of the first transcontinental railroad. Military doctors developed a control and cure for yellow fever and typhoid, and Union troops responsibly administered the Freedmen's Bureau—the first "social welfare" effort of the federal government. In the nation's capital, military engineers constructed the Washington Monument, the Pentagon, the Library of Congress, and portions of the Capitol. Probably the Army's greatest engineering accomplishment was construction of the Panama Canal, completed in 1914.

Today the federal government continues to call upon military engineers to design navigational improvement projects and to help with flood control.¹⁰

Beginning in the 1920s, the United States Air Service, predecessor of the United States Air Force, continued in this nation-building tradition. The advent of the airplane and modern technology added a new dimension of speed and effectiveness to military civic action. Some fifteen years after the Wright brothers made their historic flight at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, military pilots were providing airmail service and flying experimental crop dusting missions against agricultural pests—operations soon taken over by commercial firms. In 1919 the Chief of the Forest Service noted that airmen had demonstrated that "forest protection is one of the civic uses of airplanes."¹¹

During the 1920s military pilots substantiated this claim by flying hundreds of thousands of miles over national forest reserves in Montana, Idaho, California, Oregon, and Washington to provide early warning fire protection and to train Air Service troops.¹² This civic work was eventually taken over by commercial pilots in 1928. Air Service experiments with aerial photography aided Army engineers in their flood control work; the Coast Guard with its campaign against rum smuggling; farmers with crop surveys, soil experiments, and irrigation projects; and city planners with designs for cities, towns, and parks.¹³

Similarly, the enormous strides made by the nation's commercial airlines resulted directly from the pioneering cross-country flights and engineering progress made by the Air Service. Military contracts awarded for advanced war planes not only helped keep the embryonic American aircraft industry alive during the 1920s and into the 1930s but also stimulated aeronautical advances in cartography, meteorology, and communications.¹⁴ Indeed, Congress authorized the replacement of military aircraft for the very purpose of insuring that the aircraft industry would develop into an economical civil enterprise. Later the Air Service itself organized a civil affairs division charged with the "encouragement of commercial aviation and of insuring proper liaison with commercial industry and with other departments of the Government using aircraft."¹⁵

Perhaps the most significant civic action project the Air Service undertook in the 1920s was the surveying, marking, and equipping of a comprehensive system of airways across the United States. President Warren G. Harding, recognizing the need for airfield development, added his encouragement. The Air Service, he advised Congress, should be "utilized...in the establishment of national transcontinental airways and in cooperation with the states in the establishment of local airdromes and landing fields."¹⁶ Accomplishments by 1925 led one U.S. senator to comment that "the remarkable success of the Army Air Service in laying out and conducting its model airways, over which army planes have flown about one million miles without any fatal accidents is an instance of what can be accomplished and what should be continued."¹⁷

Besides the many civic contributions made by military aviation, military pilots have flown millions of miles on humanitarian missions and in response to civil emergencies. One of the earliest missions was undertaken in California in August 1922, when Crissy Field pilots transported the rescue workers who saved the lives of forty-eight men entombed in a burning mine. After the Air Service was redesignated the Army Air Corps in 1926, military "crash rescue" planes became available to fly emergency missions on a routine basis.¹⁸

In February 1939, the Air Corps rushed emergency help to victims of a major

earthquake in Chile. Loaded with nearly two tons of Red Cross medical supplies, an experimental XB-15 bomber and two other planes lifted supplies to Santiago and remained there for ten days to deliver medicines and evacuate earthquake victims to hospitals. These Army Air Corps mercy flights to an area outside the United States marked a shift of U.S. military civic actions from the purely domestic scene to the world stage.

Since World War II Air Force pilots have helped fight a cholera plague in Egypt (1947), flown relief missions to succor earthquake victims in Ecuador (1949), Greece (1953), Morocco (1960), Chile (1960), Peru (1960), Iran (1962), Libya (1963), Italy (1976), and to aid people fleeing floods in the United Kingdom (1953), the Netherlands (1953), East Pakistan (1954), Mexico (1955), Japan (1957), Brazil (1960), Kenya and Somalia (1961), and Morocco (1963).

Air Force personnel flew food to Italian towns isolated by snowstorms in 1956 and to the riot-torn Congo in 1961. They transported insecticides and flew aerial spray missions to combat locust plagues in North Africa (1957) and in Thailand (1963). In "Operation Safe Haven," the Air Force evacuated thousands of refugees, many of them sick or wounded, who were fleeing communist atrocities in Hungary (1956-1957). And in 1948 and 1949 American pilots participated in the Berlin airlift, preventing West Berlin from falling to the Soviets. There is scarcely a country in Europe today which has not been a beneficiary of the humanitarian and disaster relief missions of the United States Air Force.¹⁹

Following World War II, American civic action policy changed considerably. While the government continued to emphasize the usefulness of the military on national development projects and in international disaster relief, many policy makers began to see the potential for using military civic action as an instrument of foreign internal defense. In the latter instance, civic actions performed by a foreign government under the direction of the American military could be used to help suppress domestic unrest caused in part by governmental unresponsiveness to popular needs. And in developing nations, which were considered especially vulnerable to communist subversion, the military could contribute to economic and political stability by injecting its skills and managerial capabilities into such areas as education, transportation, construction, and administration, and thus decrease the appeal of communist propaganda. Military civic action could thus become both a preventive and a curative weapon for communist-inspired insurrection and an additional American tool with which to fight the cold war.

The transformation of civic action from a largely voluntary, domestic function to the political and military weapon which it eventually became in Vietnam was not an overnight occurrence. It had its origins not only in America's own brief colonial experience in the Philippines but more immediately in the post-World War II decisions of President Harry S. Truman and Congress to help the war-torn countries of the Middle East, Europe, and Asia. When the fighting in World War II was over and a mutual enemy defeated, the wartime alliance between the Allies of the West and the Soviet Union came to an abrupt end. The Soviets established communist regimes in one East European country after the other, and the United States searched for some means to stem the growing tide of Soviet power and influence.²⁰ Western Europe was also in a shambles, exhausted by the war. Under such conditions, communism was able to make inroads with a multitude of promises and appeals to those distressed peoples. While outside Soviet pressure was brought to bear against Turkey,

communist inspired guerrillas in Greece threatened the immediate overthrow of the legitimate national government there as well. Britain appealed to the United States for help. It could no longer bear the burden of Greece alone.

In March 1947 Congress responded with the Greece Turkey emergency aid program and soon followed with the European Recovery Program, known popularly as the Marshall Plan. Its stated aim was to assist those countries in the task of post-war reconstruction and improvement of their economies. As President Truman noted in his inaugural address on January 20, 1949, the objective was "to help the free people of the world, through their own efforts, to produce more food, more clothing, more materials for housing, and more mechanical power to lighten their burdens."²¹ He left unstated the more important belief of the time that such assistance was vital to America's own security because it would serve to "contain" Soviet expansionism. This belief had been enunciated earlier as the Truman Doctrine.²²

The large amounts of economic and military aid funneled into Greece eased the American mind somewhat about the immediate prospects for a communist takeover. But the feeling still lingered that more long-term measures were needed. Shortly after Congressional approval of the monetary aid package to Greece in 1947, the State Department called upon United States Army engineers to help rebuild the country's transportation facilities. By December 3, 1947, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had established a Joint United States Military Advisory and Planning Group to Greece, and by July the first C-47 had arrived to give support to the American Mission for Aid to Greece. Throughout the next three years the services provided by the United States Air Forces in Europe proved to be "essential to the support of the Greek Army fighting the Communist guerrilla elements."²³ And by 1949 the United States military had established the precedent for aiding a foreign nation restore internal order by supervising the rebuilding of ports, repairing damaged railroads, building and repairing strategic roads, and assuring a supply of the basic necessities of food fuel, and clothing.²⁴

In 1949 Congress embodied these ideas in law with the passage of the Mutual Defense Assistance Act. This "Mutual Security Act" emphasized the role of military, economic, and technical assistance in contributing to the "mutual security and individual and collective defenses of the free world" and in the development of the resources of the free world "in the interest of their security and independence." The challenges of the Cold War thus led to a union of the previously separate functions of the military. The humanitarian and economic concept of nation-building now began to be linked for the first time not only to politics but to United States national security and foreign policy interests.²⁵

Additional experiments using military civic action as part of our foreign aid program took place in the early 1950s and tightened the linkage between these ideas. During the Korean War, United States armed forces personnel again became involved in helping the people of a war-ravaged country. U.S. actions in Korea were especially significant, however, because of the uniqueness of using a combat force in the field to rehabilitate the nation it had fought over. Moreover, the success of the American program demonstrated the possibility of using military resources to assist in socioeconomic fields without detriment to the military mission.

At first, American aid to Korea was given on an informal, spontaneous basis. Rations were shared with the hungry, and funds and clothing were collected to support war refugees. The humanitarian efforts of fighter pilot Dean E. Hess to rescue

Korean orphans and provide them a place of safety achieved widespread publicity.²⁶ But it was only after the cease-fire that large scale civic action projects got under way.

During the summer of 1953, after seeing firsthand some of the churches and schools constructed by U.S. military personnel, Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor—then commander of the Eighth Army—took steps to provide additional funds and centralized control for the voluntary program. In August, Gen. Taylor wrote to Assistant Secretary of Defense John A. Hannah, who in turn won President Dwight D. Eisenhower's enthusiastic support. In November, Congress also approved Taylor's request and authorized the diversion of military supplies and equipment into a formal relief and rehabilitation activity officially designated as Armed Forces Assistance to Korea.²⁷

Construction work began immediately. Projects were selected which would replace the war-damaged facilities that had served the largest number of people and been of greatest benefit to local residents. Lumber, no longer needed for military hospitals, was used to construct school buildings, and cement intended for bunkers was used in foundations for orphanages. With Taylor's encouragement, military units began "adopting" entire communities. Working side-by-side with Korean civilians, the Americans contributed from their own salaries millions of dollars for needed supplies and equipment.²⁸

At first American troops volunteered for the work in their off duty time, with the transportation corps providing trucks and drivers when they could be spared from military duty. Gen. Taylor was designated Executive Agent for the undertaking and was responsible for coordinating and supervising Air Force and Navy, as well as Army, participation. By November 1955, almost 3,000 projects had been completed, with an estimated value to the Korean economy of more than \$48 million. Materials and supplies furnished by the United States amounted to \$15 million. In 1959 all U.S. units stationed in Korea were required to participate actively in the program, and by January of that year the number of completed projects had grown to nearly 4,000. These improvements were valued at more than \$66 million, while the United States contribution amounted to only \$21 million.²⁹

The Armed Forces Assistance to Korea program set a number of important precedents which would serve as goals and models for later U.S. civic action projects in Southeast Asia. The construction phase of the program was designed to be primarily a self help program. Korean agencies were expected to provide a major portion of the construction materials and labor involved in completion of a project.³⁰ As of 1968, for example, American funds could not exceed more than one-third of the total cost of the Korean program, and in 1969 an Eighth Army regulation stipulated that no single project could utilize more than \$1,500 in American materials.³¹ Projects were selected only after consultation with civic leaders in Korean communities and determination that such projects could be successfully operated after the American military contribution had been completed. American armed forces personnel were not required to do manual labor on projects, but they often voluntarily joined in the work with contributions of money, gifts, and services. They normally furnished guidance and supervision. At the discretion of local commanders, certain military equipment was loaned for use on approved projects, provided that such use did not detract from a state of combat readiness. The projects were usually conducted on a small scale, could be completed in one construction season, and were located within the vicinity of the unit sponsoring the project—usually in small urban or rural areas.

The basic objectives of the Korean civic action program were significant also in their applicability to military civic action as it would be carried out later in Vietnam. They were essentially twofold. First, the program was designed to contribute to the economic and sociological development of the Republic of Korea by aiding the Korean people at the grass roots level. At the inception of the program a general fear existed that unless something were done quickly to bolster Korea's economy, the communists would gain such popular support they could take over the whole peninsula. Voicing this fear, one American officer in the United States military government in Korea noted in 1954 that:

the existing relief economy in Korea provides a fertile field for the Communist agitator and propagandist. Misery breeds dissatisfaction and a hungry man, worried about his family and with no normal outlet for his material desire to work and produce a livelihood by his own efforts, is vastly more susceptible to insidious, cleverly presented and well-disguised Communist anti-western propaganda than he was when he had a job and his nation had a viable, growing economy. The Korean who spurned Communism in 1950 may well be questioning the wisdom of his action today.³²

He went on to recommend that "the strongest perimeter defense America can build in Asia or anywhere else is one built on understanding and mutual respect, and it is the only defense which cannot be penetrated by Communism."³³ And this was the second objective of the Korean civic action program:

to enhance civil-military community relationships and thereby not only create a receptive climate among Korean communities for the continued presence of U.S. military personnel but also enable the military services, U.S. as well as South Korean, to win the confidence of the population, thus making the area less vulnerable to communist propaganda.³⁴

The Korean program was successful for a number of reasons. There was a real need for American social and economic assistance. American forces were concentrated in the area, and they possessed relatively large stocks of supplies and equipment. The program was well-directed and well-coordinated. Above all, American military involvement received wholehearted support not only from Washington but from field commanders as well.

Even as lessons were being learned and precedents were being set in South Korea, additional experiments with civic action were taking place in the Philippines. In the latter instance, however, civic action was used, not as a preventive measure against a possible future insurgency, but actually as a counterinsurgency measure itself. American military personnel and advisors, among them, Lt. Col. Edward G. Lansdale (later a major general in the United States Air Force), helped develop the counter-guerilla campaign which, according to Lansdale, was "classic in its lessons of the strategy and tactics that win."³⁵

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, communist-led and inspired dissidents were able to make substantial inroads in the Philippine countryside, using Mao Tse-tung's

guerrilla warfare doctrine and tactics. Known as the Hukbalahap (Huk) rebellion, the insurgency failed to yield to conventional military tactics. Much of the-Huk activity took place in Central Luzon—so much so that newspapers began calling the area "Huklandia."³⁶ The-Huks were active in other parts of the Philippines, but Central Luzon remained the hot spot for several reasons. It was inhabited by an agrarian population which felt, with some justification, that it was not getting a fair deal from the government. Moreover, the farming areas were interspersed among swamps, mountains, and jungle areas which made ideal bases for guerrillas. Food was plentiful. And, to complete the picture, it had American military bases in the area which were manned by personnel under strict orders to keep out of the "domestic affairs" of the Filipinos. Their orders specified that they were there to help defend the Philippines from "external aggression."³⁷

The communists were able to field about 15,000 armed Huks in guerrilla units. These were supported by a claimed million sympathizers among the population, whom the communists labelled their "mass base." This million represented a large portion of the 17 to 20 million total Filipino population at the time. Opposing the communist armed force, which often was able to hide in among the civilian population, were the Philippine Armed Forces of around 50,000.

During the first years of the anti-Huk campaign, the Philippine military used conventional, small-unit combat techniques. They made excellent use of fire-power. They were well-equipped and well-trained. According to the usual military doctrine, they should have won, but they did not. Instead the communist Huks actually increased the strength of their forces in the field, extended their areas of influence and control, and greatly increased the numbers of population supporting them.

In mid-1950 the situation suddenly reversed itself shortly after Ramon Magsaysay was appointed Secretary of National Defense and given broad powers to put an end to the rebellion. For the first few months the Philippine army continued to employ conventional tactics, and despite Magsaysay's alleged intention of "exterminating every Communist and Hukbalahap member in the Philippines," the army continued to lose the battle.³⁸ Gradually, Magsaysay began to realize that the Huk movement involved much more than a military threat, that there were important social, economic, and psychological reasons for its continued successes. The Huks were recruiting most of their support from tenant farmers who were being exploited by landlords and bankers in a near-feudal system of economic peonage. The main propaganda theme of the communists was "land for the landless." The people had also come to distrust the Philippine army. Instead of protecting the people, it had offended many by its undisciplined behavior. Filipino soldiers "confiscated" whatever they needed and often alienated large segments of the civilian population by either the arrogance of their methods or their capacity.³⁹

Then, at the suggestion and under the guidance of Edward Lansdale, Magsaysay instituted several significant changes. Lansdale had gained the confidence of Magsaysay about a year prior to his assignment to the Philippines when Magsaysay was on Congressional business in Washington. And during a World War II assignment to the Philippines, Lansdale had won the friendship and respect of several high-ranking Philippine officials as well as American military personnel. In September 1950 Gen. Jonathan Anderson, Chief of the Joint U.S. Military Advisory Group, and American Ambassador to the Philippines Myron Cowen negotiated Lansdale's return to the Philippines in an advisory capacity with the American Military Advisory Group.

Lansdale had the backing of Gen. Nathan F. Twining, Vice Chief of Staff of the Air Force, and of the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs. Gen. Anderson, Ambassador Cowen, and the Chief of Staff of the Philippine armed forces agreed that Lansdale was to advise not only on intelligence matters, which was his speciality, but on the whole problem of the Huk rebellion.⁴⁰

By this time Lansdale had begun to establish a reputation for the innovative and unconventional, and in the Philippines he was authorized to experiment with his new ideas. At Lansdale's request, Magsaysay created a psychological warfare division within his staff called the Civil Affairs Office.⁴¹ Lansdale proposed that the new office direct the military to perform not only psychological work as part of its routine combat activities but also "improve the attitude and behavior of troops toward civilians—those masses whose loyalty is the imperative stake in a people's war as waged by the Communists."⁴² This was not an idea original with Lansdale. It had been enunciated some 2,000 years before by Sun Tzu as one of the success factors governing the art of guerrilla warfare. Sun Tzu defined it as the "moral law" which "causes the people to be in complete accord with their ruler, so that they follow him regardless of their lives, undismayed by any danger." Mao Tse-tung, realizing also the importance of a good army-people relationship, reiterated it in the 1940s when he wrote his tactical doctrine for the Chinese Communist Eighth Route Army. "The people are like the water," he explained, "and the army is like the fish." The Filipino communists recognized the value of the principle, and their campaign was succeeding. "The way to start defeating Communist guerrilla leaders and forces," Lansdale explained later, "is to use the same cardinal principle—and to use it better. Free citizens always have the opportunity to make stronger, more dynamic use of this principle than the Communists can."⁴³ To the Philippine army's mission of physically defeating the Huks, then, was added the additional duty of regaining the confidence of the people by demonstrating that government soldiers could and would protect and help them. In the combat battalions, the commander and his civil affairs officer met with village leaders to work out relationships between troops and civilians, methods of protecting farmers from guerilla raids during planting and harvest, and village self defense. This led to further army actions, such, for example, as escorting Department of Agriculture agents into combat areas to help farmers and using troop labor to build village schools and other public works, and to dig water wells. Noting that tenant farmers were mostly without counsel in court cases involving land problems, the army quickly arranged for a number of its judge advocate officers to appear in court in civilian clothes to represent the farmers. Special arrangements with the telegraph office allowed poor people to bring complaints to the attention of the proper authorities for a cost of only five cents, whatever the length of the message. Civilians wounded in fire fights between the army and the Huks were treated in army hospitals.⁴⁴ In the 1951 election, troops guarded candidates to help protect their right of free speech and freedom of assembly, and then guarded the polls and the ballots to increase the possibility of an honest, free election.⁴⁵

As a result of his unusual program, Magsaysay won the people over to the side of the government and broke the back of the rebellion. Lacking an appropriate term to describe all this military assistance at the village level, Lansdale coined the phrase "military civic action."⁴⁶ By 1953, when Magsaysay himself was elected president, the people, with their own government in power, were even less inclined to help the communists overthrow it. And the improved relations with the population yielded an

abundance of combat intelligence needed for a successful military campaign.⁴⁷

While carrying out a vigorous military offensive against the Huks, Magsaysay also instituted measures to induce the guerrillas to surrender. Many of them knew little or nothing about communism. They had joined the rebels out of despair with their lot. Magsaysay offered free government land to rebels who surrendered. And he established an Economic Development Corps to help clear the land and construct basic facilities. As Magsaysay explained, the armed forces offered the Huks the choice of receiving either the "hand of all-out force or all-out friendship."⁴⁸ Large-scale surrenders of rank-and-file guerrillas, together with effective military and police drives against the hard core of communist leadership, finally reduced the Huk movement to a minor threat, easily controlled by routine police action.⁴⁹

By the mid-1950s, then, the armed forces in the Philippines and Korea had developed an operational doctrine of assisting the civilian population to bring about a "brotherhood" between soldiers and civilians. The initial reason was elementary: to win over the people to help the army in finding and fighting an enemy who hid among the population. The success of the Philippine experience and later the accomplishments of the Armed Forces Assistance to Korea program spawned considerable interest in the use of civic action as a counterinsurgency tool. Observers from Malaya, Vietnam, Laos, and Burma visited the Philippines to study this doctrine in the field and took home with them many operational ideas which they further adapted and developed to fit their own special local needs.⁵⁰ In the United States plans were laid to study the possibility of using civic action as a cold war weapon.

In June and July 1953 during the final phase of the anti-Huk campaign, Lansdale accepted the invitation of Lt. Gen. John W. O'Daniel and joined a small advisory group to the French in Indochina. By that time the first Indochina war was drawing to a close, and French General Henri Navarre, who had just assumed the French command, was avidly seeking solutions to his dismal problems. Although Navarre's staff officers remembered Lansdale's exploits in the Philippines and viewed him as a dangerous revolutionary who sought to "stir up the natives against the French," General Navarre himself welcomed his visit. Both the French General and O'Daniel sought out his ideas on such tactics as psychological warfare, unconventional techniques, combat intelligence collection, pacification, and counter-guerrilla operations.⁵¹ Even at this time French military analysts in Paris had begun to develop their own theories about communist revolutionary warfare, and many were becoming convinced that such a war could not be won by the West unless it adopted the same unconventional social, economic, and political tactics used so effectively by communist guerrillas.⁵² To be sure, French forces in the field had already conceived of what would later be called the "pacification program" by the United States and had sent out rudimentary civic action teams, called *Groupes Administratifs Mobiles* to rural villages in an attempt to extend French control to Viet Minh-dominated areas. But in 1953 French civic action concepts were still in the formative stage, and none of the French efforts to bring security and economic development to the countryside had been fully successful, though some had realized temporary gains. Even the *Groupes Administratifs Mobiles* were viewed as merely experimental organizations.⁵³ Moreover, a truly unconventional campaign would have required additional troops to counter the enemy's increasing strength than the French were willing to field, while most French officers were not prepared to fight even a guerrilla war by any means other than conventional methods. Time had to await the Algerian uprising for the French to

employ their new ideas on counterinsurgency and special operations.⁵⁴

Meanwhile, a disheartened Lansdale left Saigon temporarily, while Ho Chi Minh completed his defeat of the French at Dien Bien Phu. At the Geneva conference which began on May 8, 1954, France, Britain, China, and the Soviet Union eventually agreed to a cease-fire in Indochina, recognized Laos and Cambodia as independent nations, and divided the Vietnamese portion of Indochina at the 17th parallel. The signatories agreed to hold an election in 1956 under the supervision of an international control commission to decide the question of unification of the two parts.⁵⁵ That the future did not bode well for a united Vietnam was evinced by two developments: a frankly communist government headed by Ho Chi Minh himself assumed control in Hanoi as the French withdrew; and the United States and the non-communist government in South Vietnam did not sign the Geneva accords.

Even before the Geneva agreements had been reached and the French had been ousted from Vietnam, the United States was formulating an idea which would become a cornerstone of U.S. policy in Vietnam. President Eisenhower gave it official expression when he observed at a press conference on April 7, 1954, that the loss of Indochina, like a "falling domino," would lead "very quickly" to the loss of other areas as well.⁵⁶ At first it was hoped that under the Geneva agreements South Vietnam would have a chance to establish a democratic government, but by the fall of that year it had become apparent that the nation faced staggering problems. It had to resettle nearly one million refugees who departed North Vietnam in 1954 after the French withdrew. The government itself, nearly paralyzed by eight years of war, was undermanned and untrained in effective self government. From the outset it faced severe economic shortages. Moreover, the North had emerged from the war with large military forces which posed a considerable threat to the Southern regime.⁵⁷

President Eisenhower, concerned about the possible loss of all Vietnam and the "Communist enslavement of millions," decided to recognize South Vietnam as an independent state. In September the President undertook to form a Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) to prevent further "Communist aggression" in the area and pledged, along with the other parties to the treaty, to resist "by means of continuous and effective self help and mutual aid armed attack and to prevent and counter subversive activities directed from without."⁵⁸ And on October 23, 1954, in a letter to Ngo Dinh Diem, who had emerged as head of the government in Saigon, Eisenhower offered American help to the new government to insure its survival, "The purpose of this offer," the President wrote, "is to assist the Government of Vietnam in developing and maintaining a strong, viable state, capable of resisting subversion or aggression through military means."⁵⁹

Thus, a commitment was made to maintain the independence and security of Southeast Asia. It would guide U.S. policy for almost two decades. No specific military means of upholding the agreements were mentioned, but the October letter to Diem did signal that the United States was preparing to use at least some of the military weapons at its disposal.

During the heat of the Geneva debates, Edward Lansdale returned to Vietnam, this time as the top American expert on guerrilla war.⁶⁰ Ambassador Donald Heath in Saigon and Gen. John O'Daniel, who by this time was commander of the U.S. Military Assistance Advisory Group to Indochina, had requested his services. Under orders from the Air Force Chief of Staff and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, with secret instructions from President Eisenhower and Secretary of State John

Foster Dulles, and with close Central Intelligence Agency connections, Lansdale was designated air attaché to the U.S. legation. His initial task was advising John Foster Dulles and Ambassador Heath. Later he became a member of the small Military Assistance Advisory Group that took over the training role from the French. His orders directed him to assist the Vietnamese on self help and counter-guerrilla measures, but very quickly he became Premier Ngo Dinh Diem's personal advisor.⁶¹ His instructions did not specify the exact measures to be used but implied that he was to help the Vietnamese much as he had helped the Filipinos. He arrived in Vietnam only to find the French still in control of almost all aspects of Vietnamese society and his reputation still as "villainous" in French eyes as before.⁶² Dr. Phan Nuy Quat, the defense minister, finally found him an advisory slot in the Vietnamese army's propaganda and information organization, for which the French had little concern. From that position Lansdale was able to counsel the Vietnamese on psychological operations and civic action.

A short while into his new assignment, Lansdale noted with alarm that village people were becoming increasingly alienated not only from the capital but from provincial centers as well provincial administrators were grossly corrupt, and administrative services lagged in areas being vacated by the Viet Minh under the Geneva accords. As in the Philippines before Magsaysay, soldiers stole what they needed from the people and in some instances were actually more brutal than the Viet Minh had been. One correspondent wrote that "far from giving security, there is every reason to suppose that the army, buttressed by the Civil Guard...is regarded by the Southern peasant as a symbol of insecurity and repression."⁶³ Lansdale feared the outcome of the 1956 plebiscite. In a minor move to counter this erosion of governmental support, he opened a school for psychological warfare training and implemented a curriculum which taught Vietnamese troops, among other things, good behavior patterns toward civilians. He met with only limited success, however, since the French, who were still in control of the army, continued to view Lansdale's ideas as alien and unorthodox; and Diem, intent on consolidating his power in Saigon, wasted little time worrying about the allegiance, much less the treatment or living conditions of the rural population. Early in 1955, however, Diem began to turn his attention to the rural areas. The impetus for this about face came in January when a Vietnamese official named Kieu Cong Cung presented Lansdale a plan for a crash program to train Vietnamese bureaucrats as true civil servants. "Cung's idea," Lansdale explained, "was to place civil service personnel out among the people, in simple dress, where they would help initially by working alongside the people, getting their hands dirty when necessary."⁶⁴ After they had served satisfactorily in this capacity for awhile, they would assume the role of enlightened public administrators. Lansdale liked the idea. "It would bring a useful government presence into the countryside quickly and produce civil servants, with some understanding of the real needs of the people."⁶⁵

By this time the advisory staff of the United States economic mission had planned establishment of a National Institute for Administration in Saigon and let a contract to Michigan State University to train and qualify rural administrators.⁶⁶ But Lansdale wanted the quicker results he believed the Cung plan would provide. He sold the idea to Diem, who saw the plan as a way to further consolidate his power, and Diem appointed Cung to start work immediately on the program. Cung would report to Diem directly and would work under the direction and sponsorship of Army General

and Defense Minister Nguyen Van Minh. Diem picked the name "civic action" for the program, borrowing the label from Lansdale's reports to him on the Philippine experiment—even though Diem did not envision the use of military personnel.⁶⁷

On May 7, 1955, Cung took office as Commissioner General for Civic Action. Within several months a pilot program had been initiated and a Civic Action commissariat established. Vietnamese functionaries believed the program would not work and did everything possible to squelch the plan. But Diem's mind had been set. Cung's training center was established in Saigon, and when no civil service personnel volunteered for field assignments, some 1,400 to 1,800 cadre were selected from among carefully screened and university-educated refugees fleeing North Vietnam. During their training students were required to dress in the *calico noir* of Southern farmers and laborers, which became their "uniform" later in the villages. By this time field agents clad in black peasant garb had become well-known political figures in the Vietnamese conflict. The Viet Minh had used them extensively and had taught them the "three widths"—to eat, sleep, and work with the people. Later the same black garment would be worn by workers for the National Liberation Front and in the Republic of Vietnam by the government's revolutionary development cadre.⁶⁸

Diem's program, borrowing the idea from the Viet Minh, required its workers also to live among and associate freely with the common villagers. Initially thirty-one civic action teams began operations in eleven provinces where communist influence dominated. Each team was composed of from four to ten men and had responsibility for a number of villages. "Provincial authorities originally refused to recognize Civic Action personnel as government officials, due to the plebeian dress," Lansdale reported; however, "Cung, dressed in the same manner, and as a high functionary close to the President, made a rapid tour of the provinces and gained grudging acceptance of this new style of government employee." The civic action teams built village halls, primary schools, dispensaries, and other facilities, provided first aid, and helped with the building of roads, pit latrines, and other community projects. Their primary objective was similar to that of the Viet Minh on whom the teams model their tactics and organizations—to win the confidence of the villagers, to introduce basic considered a threat by the Viet Minh. Communist agents began political attacks to stir up the people against them and finally turned to murder.⁶⁹

Soon the Diem government, however, caught up in its anti-communist campaign and drive for power consolidation, lost sight of the original social and economic goals it had established for the teams. As the teams proved themselves in the villages, Diem ordered them to start working with the Army in its pacification program. They were sent out as civil government "troops," eventually serving in every province in South Vietnam, including combat zones.⁷⁰

These activities helped convert the cadres away from civic action into exclusively propaganda and political instruments. Diem directed them to dissolve the local governments and take complete command of the hamlets. The teams were still composed largely of repatriated Northerners who were not only outsiders but also Catholics. Thus, in addition to eliminating local representative government, Diem also imposed an outside, non-Buddhist hierarchy on a rural population which between mid-1954 and late 1955 had indicated a willingness to support a central government. Instead of winning allegiance from the people, conditions were created that encouraged the rise of a Viet Cong insurgency. In late 1956, Diem drastically cut back on civic action and turned to terrorist tactics, further alienating the people and

throwing even more popular support to the communists. Except for a brief period in 1954 and 1955, then, when the peasants responded to the honest compassion of the early cadres, a situation developed exactly opposite to the original objectives of the civic action plan. Military forces and civic action teams alike resembled conquerors more than protectors of the people. Graft and corruption flourished. Even an effort by the United States economic mission to salvage the civic action idea by circumventing the Saigon dominated program and applying economic resources directly at the grass roots level, ended in failure when a desperate Diem scuttled the attempt.⁷¹

All the while Edward Lansdale had watched the deterioration of the civic action program and United States attempts to prop it up with money and equipment despite its content and defects. His protests to the Eisenhower administration failed to produce a policy change. At the end of 1956 he was recalled from Vietnam, and Diem's totalitarian practices continued without restraint. In 1957 the death of Kieu Cong Cung ended any hope for bringing about social and economic reform at this point in the Diem regime. Diem's brother-in-law, Ngo Dinh Nhu, absorbed the remnants of the civic action directorate into his political and intelligence organization. The peasants now began associating civic action personnel with Nhu's secret police.⁷²

While these activities were taking place in the Philippines, Korea, and Vietnam, at least some of the lessons were not lost on America. In 1958 William J. Lederer and Eugene Burdick published a novel entitled, *The Ugly American*, in which they forecast that America would either win or lose against communist insurgents in Southeast Asia, depending on how successfully it stood up to the guerrillas in the battle for popular support.⁷³ Lansdale himself was portrayed in the book as Col. Hillandale, an American who cared enough to change anonymous, bureaucratic programs into personal responses to the needs of real people. The book received a warm response and came at a time when Washington, too, was reflecting on an appropriate counter to insurgency warfare. President Eisenhower in particular was receptive to any new idea which might be useful as a cold war weapon. Yet at the same time he feared the dangers inherent in large defense organizations and the rise of a "military-industrial complex"—a fear he gave voice to in 1961.⁷⁴ Was the civic use of military forces an appropriate solution to both the problem of insurgency warfare and the expense and danger of a large, idle standing arm? Many astute observers believed it had worked in the Philippines. And for this reason Eisenhower had supported the Armed Forces Assistance to Korea program as well as President Diem's efforts in Vietnam.

In the mid-1950s while State Department experts under the leadership of Herbert Hoover, Jr. probed the issue of the constructive use of military forces, the U.S. Army's Office of the Chief of Civil Affairs was investigating the same matter.⁷⁵ In December 1954, under the direction of Gen. Taylor, an outline plan was drawn up for the application of a Korean-type program to underdeveloped countries outside Korea. The plan envisioned medical and construction programs, relying on indigenous sources of labor and materials and emphasizing "short-term, impact-producing projects."⁷⁶ Nothing came of the plan until early in 1956 when Lt. Col. L. J. Legere of the White House Staff wrote informally to the Army Chief of Staff emphasizing the effectiveness of civic action in Korea and mentioning that the State Department was planning to re-evaluate the entire foreign military and economic aid programs in light of the successful assistance program in Korea. On May 28, 1956, in a letter to Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs Walter S. Robertson, the Army Chief of

Staff suggested considering the possibility of planning Korean-type programs for other underdeveloped countries which the United States was desirous of helping. He suggested further that in those countries where the United States already had military missions, this civic contribution could come from Military Assistance Advisory Group personnel, trained and reinforced for that purpose. On June 7, Robertson agreed to give the idea further consideration and designated a representative on his staff to work with the Army for that purpose.⁷⁷

Late in June the Army completed its study and sent its recommendations to the Secretary of Defense. The study concluded that "an aid program based on the AFAK [Armed Forces Assistance to Korea] principle of helping the indigenous people help themselves can most appropriately be applied in other underdeveloped areas of the free world, as well as Korea." Such a program would be directed by the country's senior U.S. military commanders and would fall within the effort of the total United States aid program. Military as well as overall U.S. foreign policy objectives would be "materially strengthened through this aid approach," and a "tremendous psychological impact" would result, increasing the morale of American military personnel and "reducing some of the social and economic pressures which cause unrest and subject the country to political exploitation."⁷⁸

In November, acting on the Army's recommendations, the Operations Coordinating Board of the Defense and State Departments directed that appropriate action be taken to extend the Korean approach to civic action to other countries on a "moderate scale." It added that to be effective such operations should be "conducted on a personalized basis to afford United States military personnel maximum opportunity for participation," and that "maximum indigenous participation...be obtained for greatest psychological and economic return."⁷⁹

By 1958 the whole question of military assistance had made its way into the U.S. Congress, occasioning considerable discussion and debate. As a result, in the closing years of his administration, Mr. Eisenhower appointed the President's Committee to Study the United States Military Assistance Program under the direction of William H. Draper, Jr., former Under Secretary of the Army. He asked the committee to focus on the relationship between military assistance and the furtherance of U.S. national security and foreign policy interests, ways of responding to the "new Communist techniques in waging the cold war," and the "impact of our military assistance programs on those related portions and objectives of the mutual security effort which are directed primarily at the economic betterment and growth of the free world."⁸⁰

The Draper Committee responded a year later with a detailed report showing a close relationship between foreign economic development and communist expansionism.⁸¹ In addition, committee members agreed on the benefits to be gained by using indigenous military forces in the socioeconomic development of their countries. "The United States should, as a matter of policy," the committee suggested, "encourage the use of the armed forces of underdeveloped countries as a major "transmission belt" of socioeconomic reform and development."⁸² "In fact," the report continued, "the role of military establishments in promoting social and economic progress may, in some cases, be as important as their contribution to the deterrence of direct military aggression.... It is not enough to charge armed forces with responsibility for the military aspects of deterrence. The opportunities for them to contribute to national objectives, short of conflict, are also great in the less developed

societies where the military occupy a pivotal position between government and populace."⁸³

The committee specifically recommended that the idea of military civic action be defined in mutual security legislation; that the Military Assistance Program be adapted more to the basic social and economic needs of each recipient country; and that "defense support," in addition to its stated objective of enabling the economy of a country to meet defense requirements, be utilized to foster general economic development such as the provision of roads, railroads, airfields, ports, communications systems, and power, and sanitation projects.⁸⁴

The fact that the Draper Committee was cognizant of the 1956 Army study and that a representative of the Chief of Civil Affairs served on the committee led members to suggest also that the U.S. military could play a valuable role in the development and training of such civic action units.⁸⁵ With considerable accuracy the committee also predicted that military civic action could be useful in connection with the "pacification" of newly liberated areas in Laos and Vietnam. The military, the report concluded, will be the "principal tool" on which Southeast Asian governments depend "not only for establishment of law and order but for civic leadership, local improvements, and development of virgin areas for settlement."⁸⁶

Draper committee analysts, however, placed several constraints on their recommendations for an otherwise vigorous implementation of a formal civic action program. First, they suggested that civic action should not "unduly detract" from the ability of military forces to carry out essential security missions. Second, it should not inhibit the long-term development of private enterprise and a sound civil economy. Third, the program should be clearly in the public interest rather than the special interest of private individuals or select groups. Fourth economic activities should not be used as an excuse for maintaining military forces not justified by purely military reasons. Fifth, the local society and economy must demonstrate its ability to absorb the programs and techniques taught by the military. And finally, such a program could be expected to produce the most visible results when used during conditions of acute civilian labor shortage, a deterioration of social discipline, and/or hazardous or unsatisfactory working conditions.⁸⁷

As far as developing and implementing a sound United States military civic action program, the final committee report indicated that the Defense Department, in coordination with the Department of State and the International Cooperation Administration (predecessor of the Agency for International Development) bore major responsibility.⁸⁸

The suggestions of the Draper group were embodied in law with the passage of the Mutual Security Act of 1959. Passage of the bill demonstrated once again that both the executive and legislative branches of the U.S. government were beginning to envisage a plan for using the military's civil capabilities to augment U.S. programs for overseas economic development and mutual security. It appeared there would be increased efforts in the future to implement the proposal.

Enactment of the Mutual Security bill had a similar impact on the armed services. When the legislation was passed, the Army had still not instituted an operational civic action program, despite the earlier enthusiasm of the Civil Affairs Office and the encouragement of the State Department. The recommendations of the Operations Coordinating Board had called for considerable study, and more importantly the whole plan had met opposition from several high-ranking Army

commanders who rejected the whole idea of assigning any significance to a nonconventional, semi-political program. Even Lansdale, who by now was back in his Pentagon office and still working on unconventional warfare doctrine with his small group of Special Forces, Air Force, and Navy supporters, tried unsuccessfully to get the Army at this time to approve a new Special Forces mission. And the Air Force at this point was too concerned with recent cut-backs in its personnel to give serious consideration to any additional responsibilities calling for more manpower, although it was giving some attention to redefining its cold war responsibilities.⁸⁹ The authorization provided by the 1959 legislation, however, stirred the services from their lethargy. In the Department of Defense's *Journal of Mutual Security* the Air Force made favorable mention of the provision in the Mutual Security Act encouraging military participation in constructive peacetime activities:

While the Military Assistance Program must be conceived primarily as a military effort, other factors must also be considered, for it cannot be successful in the long run unless the less developed recipient countries undergo significant changes—organizational, sociological, economic and sometimes political.... It must be emphasized that many military activities and training programs contribute a dual capability; that is, by accomplishing a military mission the indigenous armed forces also enhance the socioeconomic condition of their respective countries.⁹⁰

Army officials went even further and recommended again to the Secretary of Defense that a definite program should be developed to encourage indigenous military forces to undertake civic action programs.⁹¹ With the legal basis for such a program now on the statute books, the recommendation was approved on May 9, 1960, forming the basis for not only the Army's but also the Air Force's civic action program.⁹² A joint Defense and State Department message communicated the authorization to the field.⁹³

The Defense Department directive authorized the Army to set up and make available for assistance to U.S. foreign missions a maximum of six small, mobile teams to encourage local military forces in constructive peacetime activities. To reflect the constructive nature of the activities to be undertaken, the Assistant Secretary of Defense suggested the teams be designated "military civic action teams." He also established some broad operational guidelines. A team would be dispatched only upon the specific invitation of the Advisory Group, after approval by the American Ambassador and the Unified Commander concerned, and with the concurrence of appropriate officials of the host government. During an assignment, a civic action team would be considered a temporary part of the Military Assistance Advisory Group and subject to its supervision and direction. While its major purpose would be to assist the Advisory Group, it was also specifically authorized to devise, develop, and implement civic action programs and provide guidance, leadership, and assistance to host country military forces engaged in civic action programs. Team personnel were to be selected from among persons qualified in a variety of activities including economic, social, and psychological fields. They could include members from all branches of the armed services as well as qualified civilians. The directive stressed the point that primary responsibility for a military civic program rested with the host government. "U.S. assistance, if required and desirable, should supplement country

efforts." Funding for the teams would come through the same channels as funds for Military Assistance Program training teams until other arrangements could be made. The funding of specific projects was to remain the responsibility of the host government. In other words, the dispatch of a mobile team would not constitute a commitment to provide assistance for subsequent civic action projects.⁹⁴ On the list of countries in which the Departments of Defense and State contemplated program action were Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam.

Throughout the initial Department of Defense directive which authorized implementation of the civic action idea and the Army guideline which followed establishing standard operating procedures, the civic action program's usefulness in furthering U.S. national interests was emphasized:

It is a concept and technique which has proved effective in reducing the threat of communist subversion, which often originates and gathers momentum in rural areas through exploitation of grievances against the government. A positive Civic Action program can help win for the legally constituted government and its security forces the confidence and cooperation of the population. Promotion and encouragement by the U.S. of such a program will help create a positive and friendly image of the United States and help gain support for the principles and the mutual objectives we wish to promote and establish.⁹⁵

And again:

Military assistance is furnished to friendly nations in order to promote the foreign policy, security, and general welfare of the U.S. and to facilitate the effective participation of such nations in arrangements for individual and collective self defense.⁹⁶

Thus by the fall of 1960, civic action training teams had been organized and were made available to military assistance personnel abroad. Later in 1960 the first such team was dispatched to Guatemala. Others soon followed to other countries, and a civic action survey team to South Vietnam determined that the government also could benefit greatly from a well-run program.⁹⁷ In 1961 Congress passed the Foreign Assistance Act, one section of which confirmed and expanded the authority already established in the 1959 Mutual Security Act. The statute specifically authorized the detailing of "members of the Armed Forces of the United States and other personnel of the Department of Defense (to less developed countries) solely to assist in an advisory capacity or to perform other duties of a noncombatant nature, including those related to training or advice related to training or advice...and to encourage those military forces "in the construction of public works and other activities helpful to economic development."⁹⁸

The Mutual Security Act of 1959 and the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, then, formed the legal basis for the civic participation of the U.S. military in foreign internal defense and specifically in foreign national development and, in addition, established guidelines for later Air Force involvement in civic activities and pacification in Southeast Asia. It was Presidential concern for world developments and an intensification of the Cold War, however, which played a major role in forging the civic

action concept into an instrument of U.S. foreign policy. In the late 1950s and the early 1960s the United States was confronted with a succession of major crises, each representing an attempt by communists to exploit the economic and political instability of underdeveloped regions. Communism's success in fomenting these crises appeared to be due to a new and aggressive insurgency and revolutionary warfare program aimed at eventual world domination.⁹⁹

On January 6, 1961, Nikita Khrushchev gave substance to these speculations by proclaiming the Soviet Union's commitment to support and encourage "wars of national liberation." Stating that such wars were "popular uprisings," he declared that "the Communists fully support just wars and march in the front rank with the peoples waging liberation struggles." Here was the pronouncement that communist leaders—deterred from more drastic means of expansion by a highly developed United States nuclear response capability—would pursue their goals by subversive insurgency.¹⁰⁰ Though insurgency warfare itself was not a new phenomenon, its threatened use as a vehicle for even further expansion of the communist ideology was. Thus, from the beginning of his administration President John F. Kennedy was convinced that the techniques of "revolutionary warfare" represented a new and ominous kind of challenge to American interests.¹⁰¹ In March, Kennedy pointed out that the whole southern half of the world—Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia—was either under direct communist pressure or facing intense "subversive activity designed to break down and supersede" the frail governmental institutions there.¹⁰² On May 25, 1961, he broke with tradition and appeared in person to present a "Special Message to the Congress on Urgent National Needs." The message expressed his concern with the covert, indirect aggression of communist guerrilla warfare:

They have fired no missiles; and their troops are seldom seen. They send arms, agitators, aid, technicians and propaganda to every troubled area. But where fighting is required, it is usually done by others—by guerrillas striking at night, by assassins striking alone...by subversives and saboteurs and insurrectionists. They prey on unstable or unpopular governments, unsealed, or unknown boundaries, unfilled hopes, convulsive change, massive poverty, illiteracy, unrest and frustration.¹⁰³

The new President was particularly concerned not only that insurgents were able to get under the nuclear guard created by Eisenhower but also that "national liberation movements" and "popular revolts" could not be clearly identified as traditional acts of war, warranting conventional responses. What the U.S. needed was new doctrines and new tactics to fight unconventional wars. He reemphasized this point when he told West Point graduates:

This is another type of war, new in its intensity, ancient in its origin—war by guerrillas, subversives, insurgents, assassins, war by ambush instead of by combat; by infiltration, instead of aggression, seeking victory by eroding and exhausting the enemy instead of engaging him.... It requires in those situations where we must counter it... a whole new kind of strategy, a wholly different kind of force, and therefore a new and wholly different kind of military training.¹⁰⁴

Thus, the search began for new methods of fighting insurgencies and new techniques of training counterinsurgency forces.

Neither the Army nor the naval service was totally prepared for the emphasis and priority the President would place on counter-guerrilla warfare. The Army had three ill-equipped and undertrained Special Forces groups, a few psychological warfare units, and one fully trained civic action team with field experience. Neither the Navy nor the Marines possessed units capable of conducting such operations.

The Air Force was equally unprepared. It had no special doctrines for counterinsurgency support and no active-duty units with counterinsurgency operations as a primary mission. The three Air Force wings which had been trained in psychological and unconventional warfare for use in Korea were de-activated in 1957 because "no requirement existed" for such operations. More stress was placed on unconventional warfare capability beginning in 1959, but by 1961 the Air Force still possessed only limited ability in that area.¹⁰⁵ It had done nothing to develop civic action teams.

In the counterinsurgency program which would be developed by the Kennedy administration for use in Southeast Asia, a primary military objective of the Air Force would be establishing and maintaining the internal security of that area. Civic action, with its capability of contributing toward political and socioeconomic reform, would be an integral part of that military counterinsurgency effort.

NOTES

Chapter I: The Growth of a Concept

1. Address at a White House Reception for Members of Congress and for the Diplomatic Corps of the Latin American Republics, Mar 13, 1961, in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: John F. Kennedy, 1961* (Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Service, 1962), p. 174.
2. Leonard Cottrell, *The Great Invasion* (New York: Coward McCann, Inc. 1962), p. 63; Flavius R. Vegetius, *Military Institutions of the Romans* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Military Service Publishing Co. 1944), p. 49.
3. Fairfax Downey, "Frontier Army," *Army*, Feb 63, p. 49.
4. Ltr, William Eustis, Secretary of War, to Benjamin Hawkins, Dec 9, 1811, in *Letters Secretary of War, 1809-1816*, Vol 3, p. 105; Ltr, Lewis Cass, Secretary of War, to Thomas H. Benton, Chairman Committee on Military Affairs, Feb 19, 1936, in U.S., Congress, House, Committee on Military Affairs, Protect Western Frontier H. Doc. 401, 24th Cong, 1st sess, Mar 3, 1836.
5. John C. Calhoun, Report on Roads and Canals, Jan 14, 1819, in Richard K. Cralle, ed, *The Works of John C. Calhoun* (New York: 1883), Vol 5, pp. 41, 50.
6. At the time West Point was established, in 1802, there were no civilian technological institutions. To fill this void, the academy curriculum placed heavy emphasis on theoretical and practical engineering. In the 1830s, when civilian institutions began to emerge, West Point graduates were often selected as professors. As Henry Adams wrote in his *History of the United States*, American scientific engineering "owed its efficiency and almost its existence to the military school at West Point."
7. In 1824 Congress passed the General Survey Act, which specifically authorized the use of the Corps of Engineers in constructing roads and canals with government aid. U.S., Congress, House, Committee on Military Affairs, Roads Constructed by the Army H. Doc. 48, 21st Cong, 2nd sess, Jan 13, 1831; Francis P. Prucha, *Broadax and Bayonet: The Role of the United States Army in the Department of the Northwest, 1815-1860* (State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1953), pp. 131-34.
8. James Monroe, Message from the President of the United States, to both Houses of Congress, at the Commencement of the Second Session of the Eighteenth Congress, Dec 7, 1824, in Report of the Secretary of War Department Documents, 1824 (Washington, D.C.: Gales and Seaton, 1824), p. 11.
9. John Quincy Adams, 1st Annual Message to Congress, Dec 6, 1925; Bennett C. Clark, *John Quincy Adams* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co, 1932), pp. 235-36.
10. The *Army Almanac* (Harrisburg, Pa.: The Stackpole Co. 1959, p. 240; William E. Daugherty and Marshall Andrews, *A Review of U.S. Historical Experience with Civil Affairs, 1776-1954* (Bethesda, Md.: Johns Hopkins University, 1961), pp. 42, 120; John B. Corr, et, al, *Two Centuries of Service* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1974).
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12. *Report of the Director of the Air Service to the Secretary of War, 1920* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1920), pp. 44-46; *Aircraft Yearbook, 1926* (New

- York: Aeronautical Chamber of Commerce of America, Inc, 1926), p. 75.
13. *Annual Report of the Chief of Air Service for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1921* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1921), pp 36-37, 39; *Aircraft Year Book, 1926*, pp. 71-77, 87-89.
 14. *Annual Report of the Director of Air Service, July 1, 1918 to June 30, 1919* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1919), pp. 54-55.
 15. *Air Service Annual Report, 1920*, p. 48. Also in an effort to stimulate commercial aviation, the Air Service designed and procured one of the world's first transport aircraft.
 16. *Annual Report of the Chief of Air Service for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1921*, p. 24.
 17. Cited in Robert F. Futrell, "Background and Growth of Military Civic Action: Recent Civic Action in the United States Air Force." USAF Historical Division, Aerospace Studies Institute, n.d., p. 6; *Aircraft Year Book, 1926*, pp 67, 69.
 18. Command Study XIII, Air Force Reserve Element Training, Staff Development Course 45-0004, Counterinsurgency, Dec 1964.
 19. "Chapter IV—USAFE Humanitarian Missions, 1945-1962, "History of United States Air Forces in Europe 1 Jan-30 Jun 1962, Vol 1, pp. 1-58; Eugene M. Zuckert, "Civic Action Is Part of Our National Policy," *Supplement to the Air Force Policy Letter for Commanders*, OSAF, Jun 1964, pp. 17-19; Briefing Material, USAF Historical Division Liaison Office, Non-military Contributions of the Air Force, 1918-1932, Jun 18, 1963; Walton S. Moody, "USAF Disaster Relief operations in Italy, May-June 1976," Hq USAFE, Office of History, Nov 1, 1976.
 20. Walter LaFeber, *America, Russia, and the Cold War, 1945-1975* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1976, 3rd ed), pp. 34-39.
 21. Inaugural Address, Jan 20, 1949, in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Harry S. Truman, 1949*, p. 115.
 22. Special Message to the Congress on Greece and Turkey: The Truman Doctrine, Mar 12, 1947, in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Harry S. Truman, 1947*, pp. 176-80.
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 25. The United States actually began to give foreign aid on a large scale just before World War II. The U.S. gave several Latin American countries financial assistance to resist economic pressures from the Axis nations. The lend-lease plan, however, proved ultimately to be the more important program. Through this plan, the United States supplied war materials to countries actively opposing or threatened by the Axis powers. The difference between the pre and post-war programs, however, was the participation of U.S. military personnel. Stuart Auerbach, "Foreign Aid: A Child of War," *Washington Post*, Oct 30, 1971, pp. 1, 8.
 26. Dean E. Hess, *Battle Hymn* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co, 1956). pp. 184-92;

see also "Korean News Digest Section," *Korean Survey*, Feb 54, p. 14.

27. Hist, CINCPAC, 1964, p. 197; Fact Sheet EACS-MH, U.S. Army, "Armed Forces Assistance to Korea, 1953 to 1971," Feb 15, 1972, p. 2; Memo, David E. McGiffert, Under Secretary USA, to Deputy Secretary of Defense, subj: Armed Forces Assistance to Korea, Sep 30, 1967.

28. Wayne T. Geissinger, "Korea, Land of Opportunity," *Korean Survey*, Aug 1954, pp. 3-4.

29. Hq US 8th Army Directive 22, Armed Forces to Korea Program, May 1, 1959; US Army Far East/Eighth Army, Two Years of Progress, July 1955-June 1957, pp. 78-80; Staff Study, US Army, CAMG/E/, Armed Forces Assistance to Korea (AFAK) Type Programs, Jun 25, 1956.

30. Policy Directive 5-11, UNC/USFK, ROK Armed Forces Civic Action Program, Jul 3, 1968.

31. EA Reg 530-1. May 24, 1968, Incl 1, Sect II, p. 6; Fact Sheet EACSMH, U.S. Army, "Armed Forces Assistance to Korea, 1953 to 1971." Feb 15, 1972, p. 3.

32. Geissinger, "Korea." pp. 3-4.

33. *Ibid.*, 6.

34. Memo, David E. McGiffert, Under Secretary of the Army, to Deputy Secretary of Defense, subj: Armed Forces Assistance to Korea (AFAK), Sep 30, 1967.

35. Edward G. Lansdale, "Introductory Comments on the Huk Campaign," in *Counterinsurgency Case History: The Philippines 1946-1954* (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Nov 1, 1965), p. 36.

36. "Federal Troops Pull Out of Huklandia," *China News* (Taipei), Dec 27, 1968.

37. Lansdale, "Introductory Comments," *Case History*, p. 37.

38. Robert R. Smith, "The Hukbalahap Insurgency," *Military Review* Vol 45 (Jun 65), p. 36.

39. Robert R. Smith, "The Philippines (1946-1954)" in D. M. Condit, et al, *Challenge and Response in Internal Conflict* Vol I (Washington: American University, Center for Research in Social Systems, Feb 68), pp. 495-96.

40. Intvw, Maj. Kenneth J. Alnwick with Maj. Gen. Edward Lansdale, Apr 25, 1971; Carlos P. Romulo and Marvin M. Gray, *The Magsaysay Story* (New York: The John Day Co, 1956), p. 125.

41. In the U.S. Army today, civic action still falls under the category of "civil affairs," which the Army in 1964 defined officially as: "Those phases of the activities of a commander which embrace the relationship between the military forces and civil authorities and people in a friendly country or area, or occupied country or area when military forces are present. Civil Affairs include...matters concerning the relationship between military forces located in a country or area and the civil authorities and people of the country or area usually involving performance by the military forces of certain functions or the exercise of certain authority normally the responsibility of the local government." *Command and Staff Guidelines for Civic Action Special Text ST 41-10-90* (Fort Gordon, Ga.: US Army, Civil Affairs School, 1964), p. 3.

42. Italics added. Edward G. Lansdale, Maj. Gen. USAF (Ret), *In the Midst of Wars: An American's Mission to Southeast Asia* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), p. 70.

43. Edward G. Lansdale, "Civic Action Helps Counter the Guerrilla Threat," *Army Information Digest*, Vol 17 (Jun 62). pp. 50-51. Lansdale went on to add that "civic action encompasses almost any action which makes the soldier a brother of the people, as well as their protector. The Communist guerrilla will claim his dogmatic kinship

to the people, to gain their support and to hide among them. The Free World soldier and his citizen allies in uniform must demonstrate a closer kinship to the people. When this is demonstrated truly, the people will help them and not the enemy. For when the army and the people become close to each other, there is no place for the enemy to hide."

44. Lansdale, "Introductory Comments," *Case History*, p. 39; Amos A. Jordan, Jr., *Foreign Aid and the Defense of Southeast Asia* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1962), p. 186.

45. Ltr, R. V. Lee, Adjutant General, USA, to Comdrs in Chief, U.S. European Command, Caribbean, Pacific, subj: Standing [sic] Operating Procedure for Civic Action Teams, Nov 16, 1960.

46. Lansdale, *Midst of Wars*, p. 70.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 71; Walter G. Hermes, *Survey of the Development of the Role of the U.S. Army Military Advisor* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, Office of the Chief of Military History, n.d.), p. 37.

48. Lansdale, "Introductory Comments," *Case History*, p. 39.

49. Smith, "Hukbalahap Insurgency," p. 42.

50. *Supplement to the Composite Report of the President's Committee to Study the United States Military Assistance Program Vol II* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1959), Annex D. p. 135.

51. Lansdale admitted that he supported Vietnamese independence, but by this time the French had already publicly agreed to the independence of Vietnam. Lansdale intvw, Apr 25, 1971; Lansdale, *Midst of Wars*, p. 110.

52. George A. Kelly, "Revolutionary War and Psychological Action," *Military Review*, Vol 40 (Oct 60), pp. 4-10.

53. Intvw, author with Col Claude F. Regis, French Liaison Officer, Fort Rucker, Alabama, Apr 16, 1980 (Regis served in the Armored Cav Regiment in Vietnam 1951-1952, and in 1963 as the H21 Battalion Commander in Algeria); John B. Bellinger, Jr., "Civilian Role in Antiguerilla Warfare," *Military Review*, Vol 41 (Sep 61), p. 93; Cornelius D. Sullivan, et al. *The Vietnam War: Its Conduct and Higher Direction* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Center for Strategic Studies, 1968), p. 81; U.S. Department of Defense, *The Senator Gravel Edition: The Pentagon Papers* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), I, 306; Wesley R. Fishel, *Vietnam: Anatomy of a Conflict* (Itasca, Ill: Fe E. Peacock Publishers, 1968), p. 596.

54. Regis intvw, Apr 16, 1980. The evolution of French thinking with regard to unconventional warfare was aptly expressed in a 1957 lecture by French Col Charles Lacheroy, former chief of the Psychological Action Service of the Ministry of Defense: "In Indochina, as in China, as in Korea, as elsewhere, we observe that the strongest seems to be beaten by the weakest. Why? Because the norms we used for weighing our opposing forces, those traditional norms, are dead. We have to face up to a novel form of warfare, novel in its accomplishments and novel in its achievements." And the French Air Deputy in Indochina, General Lionel Chassin, wrote: "It is time for the army to cease being the *grande muette*. The time has come for the Free World, unless it wishes to die a violent death, to apply certain of its adversary's methods. And one of these methods—probably the most important resides in the ideological role which, behind the Iron Curtain, has been assigned to the military forces." Kelly, "Revolutionary War," pp. 9-10.

55. For the texts of the Geneva agreements on the cessation of hostilities in Indochina,

- see *American Foreign Policy, 1950-1955 Basic Documents*, Vol I (Washington, D.C.: Department of State Publication 6446), pp. 750-85.
56. The President's News Conference, Apr 7, 1954, in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1954*, pp. 382-83.
57. Robert S. McNamara, "United States Policy in Vietnam," *Armed Forces Information and Education for Commander* Vol 3 (Apr 15, 1964, p. 2.
58. See "Text of Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty," *Department of State Bulletin*, Vol 31 (Sep 20, 1959), pp. 393-95.
59. Ltr, Dwight D. Eisenhower to Ngo Dinh Diem, Oct 23, 1954, in *Department of State Bulletin* Nov 15, 1954, pp. 735-36.
60. David Halberstam, *The Best and the Brightest* (New York: Random House, 1972), p. 126; As J. Langguth, "Our Policy-Making Men in Saigon," *New York Times Magazine*, Apr 28, 1968, p. 29.
61. Intvw, author with Maj Gen Lansdale, Jun 2, 1980; Richard Critchfield, "Lansdale Still a Saigon Force," *Washington Star*, Apr 2, 1966; John Maffre, "Return of a Cold Warrior," *Washington Post*, Sep 29, 1968, p. 30; Gene Roberts, "Lansdale Retires from Saigon Post," *New York Times*, Jun 16, 1968, p. 10; Lansdale, *Midst of Wars*, pp. 126-31.
62. Lansdale intvw, Apr 25, 1971.
63. David Hotham as cited in *Gravel Pentagon Papers*, I, 306.
64. Edward G. Lansdale Report, *Gravel Pentagon Papers*, I, 307.
65. Lansdale, *Midst of Wars*, p. 210.
66. On Jun 29, 1950 when President Truman decided to provide military assistance to the French Union Forces and to establish a Military Assistance Advisory Group to the Bao Dai government, he also set up a U.S. organization known as the Special Technical and Economic mission to provide U.S. economic aid to the Vietnamese people through the French. Sullivan, *Vietnam War*, p. 83.
67. Lansdale, *Midst of Wars*, p. 210.
68. John C. Donnell, "Pacification Reassessed," *Asian Survey*, Vol VII (Aug 67), p. 567.
69. Lansdale Report, *Gravel Pentagon Papers* I, 307; intvw, Maj Richard B. Clement with G. Frederick Reinhardt, U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Vietnam, 1955-1957, Jun 30, 1970; Fishel, *Anatomy of a Conflict*, pp. 597-598; John D. Montgomery, *The Politics of Foreign Aid: American Experience in Southeast Asia* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1962), p. 71.
70. *Ibid.* p. 308.
71. Sullivan, *Vietnam War*, pp. 83-84; Gerald Hickey, *Village in Vietnam* (New Haven, Ct.: Yale University Press, 1964), p. 182.
72. Lansdale Report, *Gravel Pentagon Papers*, I, 308; Montgomery, *Politics of Foreign Aid*, p. 70.
73. William J. Lederer and Eugene Burdick, *The Ugly American* (Greenwich, Ct.: Fawcett Publications, 1958).
74. Farewell Radio and Television Address to the American People, Jan 17, 1961, in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1960-1961*, p. 421.
75. Working Paper, DAMO-ODM, A Review of the Civic Action Program, n.d.; Hugh Hanning, *The Peaceful Uses of Military Forces* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967), p. 216.
76. Staff Study, U.S. Army, CAMG/E/, Armed Forces Assistance to Korea (AFAK) Type

Programs, Jun 25, 1956, Inclosure 2.

77. *Ibid.*, Inclosures 3, 4, 5.

78. *Ibid.*

79. Joint Msg, Departments of Defense, State, ICA, and USIA to Ambassadors, Unified Commanders, MAAG Chiefs, United States Information Service Posts and Directors United States Operations Missions, subj: Extension of Armed Forces to Korea (AFAK) Type Program, Nov 1, 1956.

80. Ltr, Dwight D. Eisenhower to William H. Draper, Jr., Nov 24, 1958, in *Composite Report of the President's Committee to Study the United States Military Assistance Program*, Vol I (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1959), Terms of Reference A, approval; ltr, President's Committee to Eisenhower, Jul 13, 1959, in President's Committee Composite Report I, 59.

81. For example, see *President's Committee Composite Report*, Vol II, Annex B, p. 40.

82. *Ibid.*, Annex C, p. 55.

83. *Ibid.*, Annex D, p. 151.

84. *Ibid.*, Annex C, p. 55.

85. *Ibid.*, Civic Action Branch, Civil Affairs Directorate, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for military Operations, *Military Civic Action* (Washington, D. C.: Department of the Army, 1963), p. 3.

86. *President's Committee Composite Report*, Vol II, Annex D, p. 119.

87. *Ibid.*, pp. 98-99, I, 166-67.

88. *Ibid.*, II, 121.

89. Richard K. Betts, *Soldiers Statesmen and Cold War Crises* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1977), p. 130.

90. Hq USAF, Evaluation Division, "MSP Notes," *Journal of Mutual Security*, Vol 13 (Jun 60), pp. 8-9; hist, Dir/Plans, Hq USAF, Jan 1-Jun 30, 1960, pp. 137-38.

91. Memo, Under Secretary of the Army to the Secretary of Defense, subj: Development of Military Civic Action Programs in Foreign Areas, May 18, 1959.

92. Memo, Assistant Secretary of Defense to Secretary of the Army, subj: Development of Military Civic Action Programs in Foreign Areas, May 9, 1960.

93. Joint Msg, CA-9472, State-Defense-ICA to Unified Commanders and U.S. Missions in Certain Less Developed Countries, subj: Encouragement and Support of Foreign Military and Paramilitary Forces in Less Developed Areas in Economic and Other Constructive Peacetime Activities, May 13, 1960.

94. *Ibid.*; see also Msg DA 979201, Department of the Army to Unified Comdrs, Jun 24, 1960.

95. Ltr, R. V. Lee, Adjutant General, USA to Comdrs in Chief, U.S. European Command, Caribbean, Pacific, subj: Standing Operating Procedure for Civic Action Teams, Nov 16, 1960.

96. *Ibid.*

97. USMACV, "ARVN Civic Action Program," *Summary of Highlights, 8 Feb 62-7 Feb 63*, n.d., p. 137.

98. United States Foreign Assistance Act, Section 505.

99. Radio and Television Report to the American People on Returning From Europe, Jun 6, 1961, in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: John F. Kennedy, 1961*, pp. 444-46.

100. Curtis E. LeMay, "Strategic Advantage is Key to All Tasks," *Supplement to the Air Force Information Policy Letter for Commander OSAF*, Nov 63, pp. 14-19.

101. Roger Hilsman, *To Move a Nation: The Politics of Foreign Policy in the Administration of John F. Kennedy* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1967), pp. 414-15.
102. Special Message to the Congress on Foreign Aid, Mar 22, 1961, in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Kennedy 1961*, p. 205.
103. Special Message to the Congress on Urgent National Needs, May 25, 1961, in *Ibid.*, pp. 396-406.
104. Remarks at West Point to the Graduating Class of the U.S. Military Academy, Jun 2, 1962, in *Ibid.*, pp. 453-54.
105. Charles H. Hildreth, "USAF Counterinsurgency Doctrines and Capabilities, 1961-1962," USAF Historical Division Liaison Office, Feb 64, pp. 4-5.

CHAPTER II

THE SEARCH FOR DEFINITIONS AND APPLICATIONS

Pure military skill is not enough,... The enemy uses economic and political warfare, propaganda, and naked military aggression in an endless combination. To win in this struggle, our officers and men must understand and combine the political, economic and civil actions with skilled military efforts in the execution of this mission.

—John F. Kennedy¹

Even before John F. Kennedy took office in January 1961, the overall situation in Southeast Asia—particularly in Laos and South Vietnam—had greatly deteriorated. The threat of the Pathet Lao to the pro-Western Lao regime during the later part of the Eisenhower administration had already focused U.S. attention on the area. Then on March 13, 1959, in Vietnam, the central committee of the Lao Dong (Communist) party in Hanoi publicly announced its intention of "liberating the South" by struggling "heroically and perseveringly to smash the Southern regime." As communist-backed insurgents grew in strength and the frequency of assassinations and kidnappings intensified, Hanoi's strategy became evident—South Vietnam would be taken by destroying the noncommunist government and leadership. Early terrorist acts were directed mainly at the village level to eliminate local leadership. Later assaults were aimed at the district and provincial levels. The ultimate objective was to discredit and overthrow President Diem himself.²

In tackling the South Vietnamese communist guerrillas (Viet Cong), the Diem government found itself confronted with political as well as military problems. As in all guerrilla wars, where the advantage usually lies with small, fast-moving bands that can kill and run back into hiding, the most effective way of combating the insurgents was to isolate them from the peasants, on whom they depended for food and information. Thus Diem's military problem became also a political one: How could he persuade the village people that it was to their advantage to support the government rather than to aid the Viet Cong rebels? This became increasingly more difficult as the totalitarian practices of Ngo Dinh Nhu and his subordinates became more flagrant.

By 1960 it seemed Diem was losing rather than gaining ground in this political struggle. While Saigon and other large South Vietnamese cities and towns remained under government control, communist subversives dominated many rural areas. They were especially powerful in the rice-growing region of the Mekong delta and along the Cambodian border.³ Posing as defenders of peasant interests, they propagandized small farmers, landless peasants, and rural workers to establish a "united bloc" against the "ruling yoke of the U.S. imperialists and their henchmen."⁴ Throughout the countryside, Vietnamese communists set up effective administrative organizations, exacting taxes from villagers and recruiting new military personnel from disaffected elements or from terrorized farmers.⁵ In villages under their control, they flew man-sized red kites with a white star—the colors of North Vietnam—to convince the population that the area was a communist domain.⁶

During this early period of rising rebel strength, the United States remained silent on the Diem regime's increasingly undemocratic practices. And instead of focusing on ways of reforming the government, winning back lost peasant support, and handling the growing insurgency, the American Military Assistance Advisory Group concentrated on organizing government forces against the threat of a massive invasion from the North. Communist guerrillas, it was assumed, could be handled adequately by a small, but well-trained police force.⁷ Attempts by individual Americans, both military and civilian, to focus attention on the internal security threat and the need for unconventional military measures were rebuffed by statements such as the one made by U.S. Advisory Group chief, Army Lieutenant General Samuel T. Williams: "The guerrillas were gradually nibbled away until they ceased to be a menace to the governments."⁸

But guerrilla terrorism continued to mount, the security situation in the countryside steadily deteriorated, and Viet Cong insurgents added new recruits to their ranks daily. Early in 1960, reacting to the widespread belief that peasant loyalty represented the key to solving the insurgency problem, the South Vietnamese government implemented a new civic action plan to "pacify" the countryside and unify the scattered population. The new effort called for the resettlement of the rural population in large communities known as "agrovilles," which were to be constructed by villagers and then maintained and guarded by the military. Once completed, ninety percent of the rural population (some ten million peasants) would be housed in eighty agrovilles, with some 400 to 500 agro-hamlets as satellites.⁹ The previously vulnerable agrarian population could then theoretically be isolated from communist propaganda and attack, and large-scale military operations could move uninhibited through the countryside, clearing out all vestiges of insurgent activity. To win the peasants' psychological support, the agrovilles would also become the means for the social and economic development of rural areas. Within a short time, however, the program proved to be poorly managed, corrupt, and burdensome to the peasants, who were not only forcefully uprooted from ancestral lands but resettled in areas too far removed from their fields to be practical.

Moreover, the Viet Cong easily infiltrated the villages and returned to cleared areas once the regular Vietnamese forces—not numerous enough to provide permanent protection—had left the scene. Stiff peasant resistance to a new lifestyle, then, as well as the administrative and military failure of the program led to its abandonment early in 1961, after only twenty-six agrovilles had been started, and with only three or four fully operative.¹⁰ Despite the earlier reluctance by both the South Vietnamese government and American military and civilian advisors to admit the existence of an insurgency, by late 1960 the threat could no longer be denied.¹¹ Over an eighteen-month period, American estimates showed that Viet Cong strength had risen from some 3,000 to more than 12,000 men, terrorist killings had reached as many as 500 a month, and rural violence had become pandemic. During that year and the beginning of 1961, almost 3,000 South Vietnamese civilians both in and out of government were assassinated and another 2,500 were kidnapped.¹² Saboteurs destroyed roads, bridges, irrigation works, public facilities, and communication lines. They burned hundreds of government-built elementary schools, and they spread terror and insecurity throughout South Vietnam. When Viet Cong bands moved into a village, executed the village chief, propagandized the terrified people, and forcibly collected taxes, the government in Saigon seemed far away.¹³ A U.S. intelligence

report confirmed the seriousness of the situation. "In the absence of more effective government measures to protect the peasants and to win their positive cooperation," it read, "the prospect is for expansion of the areas of Viet Cong control in the countryside."¹⁴ An urgent cable from U.S. Ambassador to South Vietnam Elbridge Durbrow recommended undertaking political, psychological, and economic measures to enable the Vietnamese government to "command loyal and enthusiastic support of widest possible segments of Vietnamese people."¹⁵ And more specifically, Edward Lansdale, on a special assignment to Vietnam, called for more emphasis on civic action, with funding by the United States.¹⁶ Some even suggested American combat support.

But substantive American aid did not come, and Diem's support continued to erode among military personnel as well as civilians. On November 11, three paratroop battalions of once faithful Diem supporters attempted a coup d'etat. In December insurgents formally organized the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam. They predicted victory within a short while.¹⁷

By the time President Kennedy was inaugurated the outlook for resolving the crisis was bleak. In the face of ever-rising rebel pressure, the Saigon government was confronted with the possible loss of the whole country to lawless bands. Already an estimated fifty-eight percent of the country had come under varying degrees of communist influence.¹⁸ Diem's army contained 150,000 regulars and 50,000 auxiliaries, far outnumbering the communist guerrillas. But these forces—trained in conventional warfare tactics by the U.S. Advisory Group with the experience of Korea and Dien Bien Phu fresh in mind—proved unequal to the task of fighting a guerrilla war.¹⁹ On January 20, President Kennedy, having been briefed on these developments and reacting to the surge in communist strength, promised to "pay any price, bear any burden,...support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and success of liberty." He added: "To those new states whom we welcome into the ranks of the free, we pledge our word that one form of colonial control shall not have passed away merely to be replaced by a far more iron tyranny."²⁰ And once in office, one of the first questions the new President asked his aides was, "What are we doing about guerrilla warfare?"²¹

The communist guerrilla threat to Vietnam was particularly disconcerting to the United States both because of the country's strategic importance and in terms of international political significance.²² In 1961 the country had the largest population in continental Southeast Asia—14 million in South Vietnam and 16 million in North Vietnam.²³ Geographically it points southward into the South China Sea. South Vietnam has a long coast line facing the Philippines on the east, and Malaya and Indonesia on the south. It controls the mouth of the Mekong River, the gateway to most of Southeast Asia. And on the west, it shares a border with Laos and Cambodia. A communist South Vietnam would make it easier to supply guerrillas in those neighboring areas.²⁴ Moreover, the administration subscribed to the "domino" theory it inherited from the Eisenhower era, believing, as Under Secretary of State George W. Ball aptly put it:

If the United States were to neglect its responsibilities to the Vietnamese people, the consequences would not be limited even to those areas; they would be worldwide. Any U.S. retreat in one area of struggle inevitable encourages Communist adventure in another.²⁵

Diplomatically, the Far East was crucial to the United States because it was a major ingredient in the world balance of power and because the territory and economic interests of the United States extended into the area, making withdrawal, if not geographically impossible, at least "politically and militarily disastrous."²⁶ On the political and psychological side, the communists had made it clear that they had chosen Vietnam as a "test case" in applying new tactics to seize territory in the face of U.S. determination to help people defend themselves against just such attempts.²⁷ As one contemporary observer noted: "What happens in Viet Nam will have a lot to do with whether other countries decide that U.S. aid will enable them to withstand similar Communist tactics, or that they had better come to the best possible terms with the Communists."²⁸ As the Kennedy administration took office in 1961, then, communist expansionism in Southeast Asia appeared as the central problem facing the United States in the Far East.²⁹

Kennedy himself had been concerned about subversive activity in Vietnam since his visit to Southeast Asia as a United States Senator in 1951. He had read the guerrilla warfare doctrines of Mao Tse-tung and Che Guevara. A combination of Khrushchev's national liberation warfare proclamation in January, the crescendo of terrorist killings in Vietnam, and the continuing military crisis in Laos convinced the President that "subterranean" war—as he called guerrilla warfare—was something needing special attention.³⁰ Then on February 2, Walt W. Rostow, who was then the White House Deputy Assistant for National Security Affairs, insisted that Kennedy read a memorandum which Edward Lansdale had written on January 17, 1961 concerning subversion in Vietnam. By this time Lansdale had been promoted to Brigadier General in the Air Force and had just returned from a trip to Vietnam ordered by the Eisenhower administration. His pessimistic report underlined the seriousness of the guerrilla threat there and the fact that the United States, training to fight another conventional, Korean-type war, was doing nothing to prepare for counterinsurgency activity. Lansdale's report concluded with the warning that the "free Vietnamese, and their government, probably will be able to do no more than postpone eventual defeat—unless they find a Vietnamese way of mobilizing their total resources and then utilizing them with spirit."³¹ And once again he urged the United States government to adopt various social, economic, political, and military measures to help Diem stabilize the countryside.³²

The prospect of America becoming involved in or training others to fight a guerrilla war came as a severe shock. It was as if "we were seeing a new phenomenon," General Maxwell Taylor, the President's special military advisor, remembered. "It hit President Kennedy right between the eyes."³³ "This is the worst yet," Kennedy is reported to have remarked when he read the Lansdale report, "Get to work on this," he told Rostow. At the same time he requested more reading material for himself on guerrilla warfare.³⁴

Just a week after taking office and a week before reading Gen. Lansdale's report, President Kennedy had routinely approved a counterinsurgency plan formulated during the last months of the Eisenhower administration. The plan called for expanded U.S. assistance to Vietnam to train and equip a Vietnamese counter-guerrilla force and to organize another Vietnamese civic action program.³⁵ The Lansdale memorandum, however, convinced the President that the American effort needed to be much more intense and that the American military itself needed to possess a counter-guerrilla capability to be able to teach Southeast Asians effectively.³⁶

On the other hand, the President made it known that he staunchly opposed a commitment of U.S. combat troops, and that the limits of American involvement were to be that of giving help and advice.³⁷ The United States government would provide economic aid; the American military would help Diem establish a "screen of security" behind which he could safely implement the programs and reforms needed to build up his popular base.³⁸

President Kennedy's concern for developing U.S. counter-guerrilla program was communicated to the Departments of Defense and State.³⁹ But when the Joint Chiefs of Staff received the request, they failed to realize the priority with which the President regarded the new program. As a result they gave the directive only routine treatment and informed Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara that U.S. Armed Forces were already sufficiently prepared to handle all types of wars, including guerrilla warfare.⁴⁰ Under the President's personal direction and frequent prodding, however, a new counterinsurgency plan was eventually worked out.⁴¹ For a number of reasons the new program placed a heavy emphasis on civic action. The Filipino victory over the Huks was the most prominent instance of the total defeat of a communist-inspired insurgency. A decisive victory there had been possible because the government had used civic action in combination with other military measures. The President was equally impressed by comparable civic action techniques employed by the British in putting down a recent insurgency in Malaya. Moreover, by then too the Korean civic action program had won widespread acclaim, and the force behind that effort—Maxwell Taylor, with many years service in the Corps of Engineers—served as President Kennedy's intimate military advisor, and subsequently as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.⁴² Finally, Edward Lansdale had several influential conversations with the President dealing with the validity of a program designed to win popular support for the government while at the same time providing protection against retaliatory communist attacks. Lansdale's ideas made a favorable impression on the President and resulted in his appointment as Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Special Operations, in which capacity he played a significant role in the development of counterinsurgency doctrine.⁴³

In addition to these influences, most government decision-makers at that time supported the idea of a close relationship between economic development and susceptibility to communist subversion.⁴⁴ The Mutual Security Act of 1959 had earlier given this idea congressional expression, and it would later constitute the philosophy behind Kennedy's Peace Corps and the Alliance for Progress. Within the Presidential cabinet, Defense Secretary McNamara probably played a key role in molding the President's opinions in this direction. He undertook a detailed study of the impact of economics on governmental stability, and a few years later, for example, offered statistical evidence that such a correlation did, in fact, exist. "Security is development," McNamara contended.⁴⁵

Within the military establishment, individual services had also begun by 1961 to emphasize the importance of encouraging political stability through military civic action. The Army was well on its way toward development of the first U.S. civic action teams. The Air Force was not only discussing the political and economic aspects of guerrilla warfare but had also notified the Army of its willingness to supply Air Force civic action personnel to serve on Army teams.⁴⁶ It also included civic action in its 1960 cold war plan as a specific technique the Air Force could use to meet new communist challenges.⁴⁷ Initially, however, the President's emphasis on civic action

and counterinsurgency met both opposition and apathy among civilian and military people. Later that spring Chairman Lyman Lemnitzer of the Joint Chiefs of Staff returned from a trip to Vietnam. He reportedly felt that the President was "oversold" on the idea of unconventional warfare and that an overemphasis on such an approach could imperil the Diem regime. The other chiefs shared his concern.⁴⁸ An Air Staff inspection team dispatched in 1962 by Air Force Chief of Staff Curtis E. LeMay, for example, determined that the "entire effort" in Vietnam constituted a "straight forward tactical air operation" and that methods used by tactical air forces in any conventional war were most appropriate.⁴⁹ Army General Earle G. Wheeler—later Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff—believed that the American commitment to Vietnam was primarily to support military action. "It is fashionable in some quarters to say that the problems in Southeast Asia are primarily political and economic rather than military," Wheeler noted. "I do not agree. The essence of the problem in Vietnam is military."⁵⁰ Even Taylor admitted that at first the President "had to beat me over the head before I understood what he was talking about when he first cornered me on this thing."⁵¹

Out in the field several U.S. military commanders flatly opposed the idea of civic action. According to Ambassador Durbrow, Advisory Chief Samuel Williams supposedly remarked that "we're here to fight, and we can't go around digging wells and things like that."⁵² Although Gen. Paul D. Harkins, head of the subsequently established Military Assistance Command, always acknowledged the importance of enterprises to win popular allegiance, he consistently subordinated political and social programs to military measures.⁵³ And when queried on the need for counterinsurgency training, airmen, soldiers, and marines usually responded that their basic training sufficiently equipped them to fight all types of wars and that they required no special training to fight guerrillas.⁵⁴ President Kennedy's attempt during his first few months in office to appoint Edward Lansdale as ambassador to South Vietnam because of his experience with Vietnamese politics and civic action was likewise opposed by certain Pentagon officials who viewed Lansdale as too "political" and "unconventional" for such an influential post.⁵⁵

Although the President acquiesced on the Lansdale appointment, he informed the Joint Chiefs of Staff that he was determined to have an American military trained to operate in a guerrilla warfare environment.⁵⁶ The President was reinforced in this action by continuing reports from Saigon that a coordinated and balanced use of psychological, economic, sociological, political, as well as military elements was needed to solve the Vietnam emergency.⁵⁷ Early in February the President ordered a quick buildup of the Army's special forces to be sent to Vietnam on training missions, to include civic action and psychological warfare.⁵⁸ He then assigned Maxwell Taylor to chair an interdepartmental "counterinsurgency" committee and convinced the State Department to conduct a special "counterinsurgency" course for American personnel assigned to underdeveloped areas worldwide. At a White House meeting of his top advisors on March 3 he ordered that preparations in doctrine, training, and organization for opposing internal war be under-taken with an emphasis comparable in importance to the preparation given conventional war.⁵⁹ On March 28, he asked Congress for a "strengthened capacity" both to deal directly with the threat of communist-directed subversive insurgency and guerrilla warfare and to "train local forces to be equally effective."⁶⁰ When the President sensed that policymakers in the Pentagon were not pushing ahead with enough ardor, he called a special meeting of

the Joint Chiefs of Staff and asked each what his branch was doing specifically to equip itself for unconventional warfare.⁶¹ Perceiving the President's dissatisfaction, the Joint Staff also directed that each service submit a quarterly report on specific action it had undertaken during the period.⁶²

Civic action as a military tactic came to flower as an adjunct to this counterinsurgency effort. The emerging doctrine of counterinsurgency revealed two possible methods for dealing with subversion. One stressed purely military tactics and emphasized the need for physically defeating belligerent guerrilla elements. The alternative approach saw counterinsurgency as primarily a political problem concerned with building viable, responsive governmental institutions. It stressed the need for humanitarian and governmental reform and development programs to win popular support and allegiance. Additionally, it called for adequate security measures to provide enough protection against terrorist attack to allow the population ideological freedom of choice. This latter approach envisioned a large role for psychological operations and civic action.⁶³

President Kennedy eventually came to support an approach somewhere between the purely military and the political. While he recognized the need for military measures, he also believed that subversive aggression could not be defeated by military action alone. A military victory could still mean a political defeat if the legitimate government lost popular support by using harsh tactics or failing to establish public trust and confidence at the grass roots level. He expressed this view when—speaking to three hundred staff officers at the Pentagon—he called for the "broadest possible understanding by all officers... [of] the armed forces [of] the inter-relationship which exists between the military, political, social and economic factors. There are no longer any clear military challenges," the President said.⁶⁴

According to the counterinsurgency program worked out by the Kennedy administration, then, achievement of American strategic objectives entailed well-organized and well-executed military operations, in addition to benevolent government policies. In Vietnam this meant giving top priority to increasing the effectiveness of Vietnamese forces in counter-guerrilla combat tactics. But it also meant training the Vietnamese regular military and civil militia to guard village security and to undertake necessary civic actions as well as encouraging the Vietnamese government to establish meaningful political, social, and economic programs to discourage defection to the insurgent movement. Thus, the doctrine of counterinsurgency added a new nonmilitary dimension to warfare and increased the responsibilities and training requirements of American advisors assigned to Southeast Asia.

This emphasis on using nonmilitary measures in subversion-prone countries became a recurring theme in Presidential pronouncements and State Department publications.⁶⁵ It naturally focused attention on the benefits of military civic action. Initially, however, it led to the enactment of a series of civilian aid programs with goals similar to those of civic action. In March the President proposed a \$20 billion Alliance for Progress program to increase the economic and social standards of the people in Latin America so they would not be attracted to communism as Cuba had been.⁶⁶ Later that month the Senate approved American membership in a new Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development which, among other things, would coordinate and allocate foreign aid contributions of member states.

More significantly, President Kennedy set up the Peace Corps by executive order to train and dispatch American volunteers for educational and technical service

abroad. This new American-sponsored aid organization represented basically the same idea as civic action, except that civilian rather than military personnel would carry out the nation-building activities. Both, for example, emphasized the importance of grass roots projects which allowed for one-to-one contact with people at the village level, and both saw the more beneficial American role as that of teacher and trainer rather than active participant.⁶⁷ The choice of the word "corps" for inclusion in the name of the agency lent it a distinctive military connotation and reinforced the idea that nation building and similar undertakings were normal functions of military organizations.⁶⁸ Two months after he established the Peace Corps, Kennedy also proposed a new Agency for International Development within the Department of State to replace the International Cooperation Administration and the Development Loan Fund. This new organization was authorized to formulate and execute all the civilian aspects of U.S. foreign developmental programs, many of which later proved to have common goals with the programs carried out by military civic action personnel.⁶⁹

While the civilian aid organizations served a valuable and primary function in dispensing U.S. technical and economic assistance abroad, arguments for military involvement in such activities became fairly common as well. Maintenance of a military capability had always imposed a strain on human and material resources urgently needed by developing nations for economic and social purposes. Armed forces, it was argued, usually produced nothing, consumed much, and—except for the civilian jobs they generated as consumers—made no direct contribution to the progress of the national community. However, since defense needs were generally more dramatic in their appeal for public support than the less glamorous requirements of peaceful economic and social growth, there was always the temptation—and in an internally insecure country, the need—to put military needs before progress. In developing countries, therefore, funds were usually lavished on military organizations, and skilled personnel, needed so badly among the civilian population, diverted into the armed forces.

Advocates of military civic action, nevertheless, argued that the buildup in military strength could actually provide a basis for economic advancement. In the military were found those capabilities necessary for national development: leadership, technical skills, administrative expertise, mobility, and dedication. If those assets were harnessed for "productive" purposes, such as building roads, railroads, power plants, airfields, harbors, and communication systems, economic progress could result, while national defense capability would remain unhindered.⁷⁰

It was also argued that in many of the emerging nations the military was the only organization that could promote development. Lack of even rudimentary communications and transportation were two factors that afflicted nearly every new country, separating rural areas of discontent from urban power centers, and creating conditions which could give rise to insurgencies. For those remote areas, military forces, especially the air force, could provide the vital communication link and bring national governmental representation to the eyes of the people. Moreover, since the military represented the government to many of the people in those inaccessible areas, it was incumbent on military personnel to gain and hold the respect of the inhabitants. One of the best and most effective methods of building this respect, it was argued, would be for military forces to use their training, knowledge, equipment, and organization to perform those tasks which would have an immediate effect on the well being of the community. Additionally, military forces had the ability not only to build,

but naturally enough, to fight when required as well. Thus, they could provide their own security. Civilian agencies on the other hand, usually found it difficult to operate in areas where bandits or guerrillas posed a serious threat.⁷¹

These arguments for using military organizations as "dual purpose" units—to provide security while encouraging national growth—particularly impressed President Kennedy as an additional method of meeting the communist challenge. Not only would large standing armies be put to maximum use, but civic action assistance would give the United States considerable leverage to encourage incumbent, non-communist governments to develop programs for the basic welfare of their people at little additional cost. In addition to frustrating communist aims, these programs would simultaneously contribute to the strengthening of free world values and ideals.⁷²

Presidential interest in such multi-purpose military programs converged with the interest of military officers who had seen what civic action could do in an insurgency environment. The resulting alliance soon overcame some of the inertia which had earlier been associated with civic action.⁷³ In March 1961, the Joint Chiefs of Staff launched an intensive effort to encourage the various commanders in chief to request U.S. civic action teams to assist in the development of foreign civic action programs. A similar effort in 1960 had been largely rhetorical and had produced requests for only a few teams, staffed entirely by Army personnel. Now the Air Force responded for the first time with its firm approval. In addition, U.S. Air Force personnel were advised to prepare themselves for service on such teams as well as to devise and demonstrate ways in which air power could play a constructive role in the development of a country. Special attention began to be given to the possible role of piloted aircraft and the use of airlift for developmental purposes.⁷⁴

The Defense Department was hindered in these attempts to apply civic action, however, because the concept was still relatively new and ill-defined. It had been applied tactically against guerrillas in the Philippines, Malaya, and Vietnam, but its military utility had received only scant publicity prior to 1961. Among those who had heard of the term, there was widespread confusion over what civic action actually entailed and who was to engage in it. Several U.S. civilian agencies were using the term to describe their various activities. In the Republic of South Vietnam a Ministry of Civic Action used both civilian and military skills to improve the public welfare, but a civilian official controlled the organization. There was also misunderstanding over whether civic action should be carried out by host-country armed forces or by American forces stationed there. And many did not understand its relationship to such concepts as "civil affairs," "community relations," and "domestic action" or how it differed from the humanitarian and disaster relief missions in which the American military had traditionally engaged. Lansdale's definition of military civic action as "almost any action which makes the soldier a brother of the people, as well as their protector" was not specific enough to guide the actions of military units expected to carry it out.⁷⁵

Shortly after President Kennedy began pressuring the military to develop counter-subversion strategies and to assist the armed forces of developing nations with nation-building programs, an intra-Defense Department effort got underway to clarify the meaning of civic action. During the early part of 1961 its official definition changed three times during a four-month period.⁷⁶ In the spring of 1962 the Joint Chiefs of Staff finally agreed on an acceptable interpretation:

The use of preponderantly indigenous military forces on projects useful to the local population at all levels in such fields as education, training, public works, agriculture, transportation, communications, health, sanitation and others contributing to economic and social development, which would also serve to improve the standing of the military forces with the population. U.S. forces may at times advise or engage in military civic actions in overseas areas).⁷⁷

Although this statement emphasized the "self-help" nature of civic action, it did not exclude American military participation abroad. In fact, the definition encompassed two distinct kinds of U.S. military participation. U.S. personnel could either "advise" foreign counterparts in correct usage of civic action, or they could perform civic actions themselves in a unilateral way. Since the Joint Chiefs of Staff definition included only military civic action, it did not technically exclude other government or private agencies from performing many of the same activities. Yet it implied that military forces would undertake civic action in areas where the normal agencies of government were unable to satisfy administrative requirements because of political instability, lack of resources, or unpreparedness for independence.⁷⁸

The definition also suggested that military civic action had two primary objectives: improving governmental rapport with civilian populations and fostering economic and social development. Consequently it had a definite role in an insurgency environment. The same month, in fact, that the Defense Department defined civic action, it also officially defined counterinsurgency as "those military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions taken by a government to defeat subversive insurgency."⁷⁹ In a counterinsurgency context, then, civic action could be used either to help prevent the outbreak of disorder or to aid in dispelling the causes of insurgency once conflict had broken out. It was not a public or community relations technique designed simply to improve relations between U.S. forces and foreign civilians, nor was it designed to be a mere charitable, humanitarian, or emotional response on the part of American servicemen.⁸⁰ The Joint Chiefs' definition left unresolved any questions on funding an American-sponsored program. It was also silent on organizational and operational details as well as interservice and interagency working relationships.⁸¹

Throughout the spring and summer of 1961 after the Cuban crisis had been resolved and while agencies within the Defense Department struggled to clarify the new cold war terminology which emerged with the administration's preoccupation with preventing "wars of national liberation," U.S. attention focused more specifically on Southeast Asia. Civic action was mentioned several times in different contexts as a necessary ingredient for success against insurgency forces there. In April, immediately after the Bay of Pigs disaster, the President appointed a special interdepartmental task force headed by Deputy Secretary of Defense Roswell W. Gilpatric and Edward Lansdale to study the Viet Cong threat and make recommendations to salvage the Diem government. Not only did the task force report underscore the necessity for civic action, but the later compilers of the *Pentagon Papers* believed that one of the major reasons the group was called together was "to work General Lansdale into the role of government-wide coordinator and manager of the country's first major test in the new art of counterinsurgency."⁸²

A week later, at a National Security Council meeting on April 29, Kennedy

approved military actions as well as the recommendations for civic action made by the task force, although the State Department subsequently cancelled the prominent role outlined for Lansdale.⁸³ Not only did the study group recommend stepping-up training procedures for Army special forces, but it also suggested dispatching civic action mobile training teams to assist South Vietnamese forces on health, welfare, and public works projects. These projects were expected to bolster Diem's support throughout the country, improve communications between the government and the people, and increase intelligence data collection. The President also approved, as part of the task force report, a long-ranged rural development-civic action program, consisting of small, highly visible "impact" projects designed to aid national economic development. This last item would not only demonstrate U.S. confidence in the country's economic and political potential but also prove Diem's determination to deal with the communist threat.⁸⁴

On May 4, Secretary of State Dean Rusk reemphasized during a press conference the determination of the United States to aid the Diem government through an increased military assistance program as well as "other measures," including a "Vigorous civil program in the economic and social field."⁸⁵ Four days later President Kennedy wrote to Ngo Dinh Diem and sent the letter with Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson to be delivered in person, Kennedy told President Diem he was: ready to join with you in an intensified endeavor to win the struggle against communism and to further the social and economic advancement of Vietnam.

If such an expanded joint effort meets with your approval, we are prepared to initiate in collaboration with your government a series of joint, mutually supporting actions in the military, political, economic, and other fields. We would propose to extend and build on our existing programs, including the Counterinsurgency Plan, and infuse into our actions a high sense of urgency and dedication.⁸⁶

The Johnson visit resulted in more rhetoric concerning the necessity for economic and social reform.⁸⁷ In their joint communiqué of May 15, Johnson and Diem also agreed on the necessity of restoring law and order to the countryside and giving a "sense of security" to the people of Vietnam. Part of that restoration would be accomplished by military specialists assisting and working "with Vietnamese armed forces in health, welfare and public works activities in Vietnamese villages."⁸⁸ "The greatest danger Southeast Asia offers to nations like the United States is not the momentary threat of communism itself," the Vice President concluded, "rather that danger stems from hunger, ignorance, poverty and disease." We must—whatever strategies we evolve-keep these enemies the point of our attack, and make imaginative use of our scientific and technological capability in such enterprises."⁸⁹

Shortly after Johnson returned to the United States, seventy-two U.S. Army guerrilla warfare experts and advisors arrived in Saigon to aid the Diem government.⁹⁰ A few days later a United States economic mission headed by Eugene Staley of the Stanford Research Institute embarked for Vietnam to advise on economic and financial problems and to suggest better ways of utilizing American aid. In July the Army organized a civic action training team for the Advisory Group in Vietnam. It was authorized to work with the Vietnamese armed forces on village-level health, welfare and public works projects as part of the campaign against Viet Cong guerrillas.⁹¹

During the summer 1961, however, cold war tension was centered more on Berlin than on Southeast Asia. Under threat of another European war, U.S. National

Guard units were called to active duty. The real, and serious business of the military seemed to reside in Europe and not in Asia where counterinsurgency appeared to some as a mere political/military diversion. Moreover, problems in Laos were being negotiated at Geneva, and the Army's special forces with their green berets, the President's special favorites, had been deployed to Vietnam to prove the strength of the Administration's new counter-insurgency doctrine.⁹²

But while world attention focused on the East-West confrontation in Europe, the American military moved to implement Presidential directives on counterinsurgency and civic action. During a Defense Department staff meeting in August, McNamara designated the Department of the Army as the executive agent for civic action programs, giving the Army overall responsibility for their planning and implementation in connection with counterinsurgency operations. General Lansdale, acting as Assistant to the Secretary of Defense, received responsibility for monitoring the programs for McNamara. In addition, Nicaragua and Colombia were selected as "laboratories" for research and development of organizational and operational matters related to civic action programs.⁹³

During this time there was some concern among Air Force planning personnel that the Army appeared to be dominating in the counterinsurgency arena. Not only did the Army head up the civic action effort, but later in August the Army Chief of Staff unilaterally proposed a plan to implement the President's recommendation for expansion of counterinsurgency forces.⁹⁴ Moreover, Country Team members and the Joint Chiefs of Staff frequently failed to mention the participation of foreign air forces and the U.S. Air Force in civic action programs.⁹⁵

Determined not to be outperformed by the Army, the Air Force directorate of plans, which was designated as the Air Staff office of primary interest for civic action, launched a drive to assure Air Force representation and recognition in the civic action field.⁹⁶ While acknowledging the Army as executive director for civic action, the Air Force offered its "maximum" support and assistance in both the planning and operational stages. The Air Force, it was emphasized, had certain "inherent capabilities" equipping it with a significant potential for civic action. Air Force units could improve host-country military skills in tactics, techniques, and procedures. It could provide impetus and assistance in initiating or improving indigenous civil air transport and air evacuation. It could stimulate agricultural development by engaging in such activities as crop dusting and defoliation. Air Force medical personnel were already equipped to teach public health principles and to aid in infectious insect control. For years the Air Force had engaged in mapping, charting, and aerial surveying activities, and in disaster relief. And above all, air power could help meet the many airlift requirements of less developed nations. Engaging in these activities in a foreign country or transferring Air Force skills to a host-country military organization would constitute an essential contribution to U.S. civic action programs.⁹⁷

That summer the Air Force also organized, equipped, and trained a specialized counterinsurgency unit with considerable potential for civic action. Earlier in April, when President Kennedy had called the special meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and asked what each was doing about guerrilla warfare, the Army, with its special forces, was best prepared to respond. The Commandant of the Marine Corps, however, pointed out that his branch was specially designed to fight counterinsurgencies and that the President should turn the whole effort over to the Marine Corps. Despite the preparation of the Army and the eagerness of the Marines, Kennedy nonetheless

insisted that each of the services bolster its own capabilities. As a result, Air Force Chief of Staff Curtis E. LeMay personally oversaw the development of the 4400th Combat Crew Training Squadron, with a mission closely allied with that of the Army special forces.⁹⁸

On April 14, the Tactical Air Command activated the special Air Force unit at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida. It became operationally ready early in September. Nicknamed "Jungle Jim," the commando unit was equipped with World War II-type aircraft (SC-47s, RB-26s, and armed T-28s) in order to avoid unnecessary sophistication and provide the most usable capability in underdeveloped and newly emerging nations. Crew members wore distinctive, camouflaged uniforms with green, Australian-type bush hats picked personally by Chief of Staff LeMay. The squadron's mission included combat and non-combat facets. Air commandos were trained to conduct or support tactical air tasks "across-the-board" in areas of insurgency and where unconventional operations were needed. They also had to be capable of training foreign air forces to accomplish the same tactical functions. The squadrons could be deployed rapidly, as a unit, to "hot spots" worldwide, or it could serve as a parent organization from which specialized units or cells could be carved to meet varying requirements such as airlift, air strike, or reconnaissance. The sixteen SC-47s in the squadron were adapted to carry more fuel than the standard C-47 for longer range deployment. Some had external parapack racks and anchor cables for delivery of airdrop cargo, and exhaust flame dampers for night operations. In addition to carrying guns and rockets, the unit's eight B-26 aircraft carried chemical tanks for use in defoliation, and cameras for reconnaissance. Members of the commando unit were qualified to instruct aircrews in low-level drop techniques for both personnel and cargo, rapid deployment measures for use in areas of suspected or actual guerrilla activity, and the use of flares for both night-time reconnaissance and enemy detection.⁹⁹

Thus equipped and trained, specialized cells from the new squadron were expected to assist and support local military and civilian people in setting up and conducting civic action programs to speed the economic development of foreign countries. They could also carry out psychological warfare missions, such as leaflet drops, airborne loudspeaker operations, and counter-information programs, and conduct disaster relief operations. Some of their goals included bettering living standards, raising the literacy rate, and improving health conditions.¹⁰⁰ Team members themselves were well-equipped to provide on-the-spot instruction in sanitation, personal hygiene, and first aid; to administer inoculations and evacuate the seriously ill; and to assist in the eradication of debilitating endemic diseases. In addition to medical and sanitation work, they assisted in or oversaw the development of local air facilities, communications networks, commercial aviation, and innovative agricultural programs. The transport aircraft, with which the air commandos were equipped, also gave them great potential in the civic action field. They could easily transport teachers, doctors, food, and building materials, for example, to remote or otherwise inaccessible regions, and bring those areas into the national economy and society.¹⁰¹

Almost concurrently with the designation of the Department of the Army as executive for civic action in connection with counterinsurgency warfare, Air Force representatives from the department of plans established close liaison with Gen. Lansdale to insure that a properly constituted element from the new Jungle Jim

squadron was included in the Latin American "laboratory" for research and development of civic action programs. Later when the Secretary of the Army undertook to establish additional U.S. civic action programs, the Air Force was prepared to provide, and insist on the inclusion of, appropriate Air Force equipment and personnel.¹⁰²

Service preparation for counter-guerrilla combat and civic action came none too soon. By the fall of 1961 the situation in South Vietnam had deteriorated to a new low. During the first nine months of that year Viet Cong strength had increased from an estimated 10,000 to 17,000, and casualties on both sides had risen to a monthly rate of between 700 and 1,200. Except for main roads and certain strongholds, communist insurgents had consolidated their control over large hinterland areas, including the delta, the highlands, and the north central coastal region. Then on September 18, in a dramatic show of strength, a force of 1,500 Viet Cong overran the provincial capital of Phuoc Vinh just fifty-five miles from Saigon, publicly assassinated the province chief, and made off with large stores of military supplies—all before the South Vietnamese government could send relief. In October the well-known Vietnamese liaison officer to the International Control Commission, Colonel Huang Thuy Lam, was kidnapped and brutally murdered. The Diem government stood by, helpless.¹⁰³ As the dry season approached, the communists appeared to be preparing for a major showdown during the coming winter. Convinced that they aimed to divide the country, isolate Hue from Saigon, and annex large sectors to North Vietnam, President Diem proclaimed a state of national emergency and appealed again to the United States.¹⁰⁴

Despite Diem's request for immediate aid, and proposals from several sources for the introduction of U.S. forces, Kennedy decided to send Maxwell Taylor instead to make a fresh appraisal of the new guerrilla offensive.¹⁰⁵ Although cognizant of the military problem, Kennedy was reluctant to send in combat troops and continued to emphasize the unconventional nature of the war and the need for nation-building activities and other nonmilitary solutions. "While the military part of the problem is of great importance in South Vietnam," he told Taylor, "its political, social, and economic elements are equally significant, and I shall expect your appraisal and your recommendations to take full account of them."¹⁰⁶

The special survey mission arrived in Saigon on October 18, Taylor was accompanied by Walt Rostow and Edward Lansdale. Not only did General Taylor share the President's predilection for solutions short of combat troops, but Rostow and Lansdale had set notions in this regard as well. In fact, Kennedy had intended initially to send Lansdale alone on a special Presidential mission to probe for social and political solutions to Diem's military problems, and only later was he asked to join the Taylor-Rostow group.¹⁰⁷ En route to Saigon, the mission stopped over in Honolulu where the Commander in Chief Pacific, Admiral Harry D. Felt, briefed Taylor on the urgency of the Vietnam crisis. On that and other occasions Felt expressed concern as well about unconventional-type solutions in Southeast Asia.¹⁰⁸ Finally, as the group arrived in Vietnam, they were struck by the devastation wrought by a ravaging flood in the Mekong delta. Crops had been completely destroyed, livestock killed, and hundreds of thousands left homeless. "The thought was always with us," Taylor recalled later, that we needed something visible which could be done quickly to offset the oppressive feeling of hopelessness which seemed to permeate all ranks of Vietnamese society.¹⁰⁹

These special influences upon Taylor, the personal views of the people composing his team, coupled with President Kennedy's instructions worked together to yield a final mission report the next month with considerable emphasis on nonmilitary measures:

It is my judgment and that of my colleagues that the United States must decide how it will cope with Khrushchev's "wars of liberation" which are really para-wars of guerrilla aggression. This is a new and dangerous Communist technique which bypasses our traditional political and military responses.¹¹⁰

The new responses Taylor recommended included a prompt and massive increase in United States military, economic, and political aid—contingent on Diem's agreement to undertake significant social reforms designed to strengthen the South Vietnamese people's will to resist communist allurements.¹¹¹ Specifically, Taylor advised dispatching U.S. technical advisors for a greatly increased counterinsurgency training program, to include social, political, and economic measures. And he also suggested that General Lansdale, whom Diem had requested, be sent to Saigon to serve as a high-level government advisor.¹¹²

In addition, Taylor recommended the deployment of a special detachment--Detachment 2—of the new Jungle Jim organization to assist the Vietnamese Air Force in developing new techniques and equipment for use against the Viet Cong, to conduct small-scale combat training operations, to support requests by Army special forces, and to undertake civic actions.¹¹³ In October, before the Taylor mission had embarked for Vietnam, Gen. LeMay had secured the Joint Chiefs' approval for such a deployment and had directed both Taylor and Lansdale to get Diem to ask specifically for a specialized cell from Jungle Jim so it could be sent in at Vietnamese request and under Military Assistance Program auspices. Diem liked the idea, formally made the request, and in mid-November, just days after Taylor had returned to the United States, the "Farm Gate" detachment arrived at Bien Hoa Air Base, twenty-eight miles from Saigon. The unit contained eight T-28s and four each of the B-26s and C-47s, with 151 carefully screened and highly trained personnel to operate them. All of these American aircraft bore Vietnamese markings. On December 26, the unit flew its first mission. By January 7, 1962, it had undertaken fifty-nine operational flights.¹¹⁴ The Taylor Report also called for the limited introduction of American troops under the guise of a civic action operation in the flooded delta area. The flood relief task force would contain engineering, medical, signal, and transportation specialists—as well as combat troops to provide protection for the relief operation. Taylor suggested that such an American unit for humanitarian purposes would not only lift morale and demonstrate American resolve to stand by the Diem regime but also provide an excuse for American military personnel to enter the region in Vietnam which contained the heaviest concentration of Viet Cong forces. After the relief work had been accomplished, these same troops could easily be transferred to surrounding areas and eased into other positions. Suffering would thereby be relieved, Viet Cong propaganda attacks on the ineffectiveness of the Diem government would be stifled, and above all, Diem and the Vietnamese people would be assured of U.S. determination to support their efforts to survive as a nation.¹¹⁵

The acceptance and implementation of the Taylor proposals led to a rapid

buildup of Americans in Vietnam who served in non-combat and civic action-related roles. By the end of 1961—in addition to the Farm Gate detachment—a military flood relief task force, experts in communications, intelligence, and bridge building, new special forces personnel, and U.S. Air Force instructors for the Vietnamese Air Force had arrived. In addition, Air Force special warfare pilots, on a mission known as "Ranch Hand," had begun to teach Vietnamese fliers how to spray communist-held areas with a chemical that turned the rice fields yellow and killed any crop grown in Viet Cong strongholds. And C-123 aircraft had begun to spray chemicals along routes of communication, including roads, railroads, and canals, to defoliate the vegetation and make it harder for the Viet Cong to stage ambushes. Before the end of the year President Kennedy had also increased airlift support for the Diem government, including helicopters, light aviation and transport aircraft, air reconnaissance planes as well as U.S. Air Force personnel to operate them.¹¹⁶

Despite this augmentation of U.S. noncombatants in Vietnam, interest in civic action itself continued to lag far behind Presidential expectations. The Military Assistance Advisory Group did establish a small civil affairs-psychological operations section within its regular staff after General Taylor's visit. But especially within the Advisory Group there was real reluctance to place greater emphasis upon socioeconomic considerations.¹¹⁷ Largely because of this reluctance to utilize civic action, President Kennedy, late in 1961, issued a key directive in which he laid down the following guidelines for its conduct:

1. In countries fighting active campaigns against internal subversion, Civic Action is an indispensable means of strengthening the economic base and establishing a link between the Armed Forces and the populace.
2. In countries threatened by external aggression, forces should participate in military Civic Action projects which do not materially impair performance of the primary military mission.
3. In countries where subversion or external attack is less imminent, selected indigenous military forces can contribute substantively to economic and social development, and such a contribution can be a major function of these forces.¹¹⁸

This memorandum served further to clarify the objectives and uses of civic action in relation to the developing U.S. counterinsurgency program. Civic action was established both as a preventive measure to avert social and economic deterioration in a country, and also as a curative or countering technique for use in active counter-guerrilla warfare to help restore internal stability. It was looked upon not as a substitute for military power, but rather as one element of it—as a weapon for combat-capable forces. Further, the directive reemphasized the central role which popular loyalty plays in a guerrilla warfare context. In effect, it said that guerrilla war-fare (and conversely, counterinsurgency) could never be effective unless it were supported, or at least passively accepted, by the people of the area. To fight subversion and insurgency, the forces of a nation had to win the people to their side. Counterinsurgency represented more than conventional warfare wherein one army

was pitted against another; it involved all the people of a nation.¹¹⁹ These precepts simply reiterated ideas which had been enunciated earlier by certain civilian and military personnel. When applied to Southeast Asia, they meant that in Vietnam civic action would be used as an actual counter-guerrilla weapon, whereas in Laos and Thailand it would serve a more preventive function.

Early the next year a funding and an organizational framework for civic action was also worked out. The original Army study of civic action in 1959 had visualized a program carried out at little or no cost to the United States, with projects being funded by the host country. It soon became apparent, however, that in many cases developing countries simply had no resources available to support civic action, and further that even small expenditures of U.S. funds on such projects could achieve disproportionately large results. The Foreign Assistance Act, passed in the fall of 1961, had authorized the use of defense funds for the furtherance of civic action programs. With this Congressional authorization and with the intensified interest in civic action generated by President Kennedy, the Department of Defense and the Agency for International Development worked out a monetary sharing arrangement.¹²⁰ Under this scheme, the Defense Department, through the Military Assistance Program, would pay for the use or purchase, and the maintenance of equipment used by military units for civic action (bulldozers or transport aircraft, for example) and for any associated training costs. The Agency for International Development would fund material costs (such as lumber, cement, and local labor) as well as consumable goods, such as gasoline, used on specific developmental projects.¹²¹

The details for implementation of local civic action programs were left for the Country Teams to work out. Ordinarily the chief of the U.S. Military Assistance and Advisory Group or Military Mission would bring to the Ambassador and the Country Team an awareness of the need for a civic action program.¹²² The burden for developing the program then rested with the Ambassador who, as head of the team, had to furnish the necessary drive, coordination, and guidance. Through consultations with their host-country counterparts, team members would attempt to generate an interest in civic action, while the Military Advisory Group or Mission assumed responsibility for indoctrinating the commanders and staffs of the local armed forces.¹²³

After the indigenous government indicated a desire to undertake a civic action program, efforts would be made to guide the local government to develop a realistic, workable plan at the same time leaving the impression that the plan was locally conceived. Assistance could be requested to conduct surveys and to develop plans. This assistance could come from local resources, or the Ambassador could request the United States government to furnish specialized personnel to assist in the local survey of possible projects. Close coordination would also be maintained with the Agency for International Development and proposals for its material support worked out.¹²⁴

After approval and coordination by the Country Team to insure that the program would complement and not compete with other programs within the country, the plan would be forwarded to the Unified Commander for his concurrence. There the plan would be studied for compatibility with the overall plans of the theater and for its impact on the various elements of the command. The comments and recommendations of the Unified Commander would then be sent to the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs for review and allocation of Military Assistance Program resources. The Joint Chiefs of Staff would

next examine the plan and finally make assignments to a military service or services to carry it out.¹²⁵

To monitor military civic action at the national level, President Kennedy established the Special Group for Counterinsurgency. This separate committee had responsibility not only for civic action but for the country's entire counterinsurgency effort. Hence it could insure a coordinated national program to combat subversive aggression. It had ultimate responsibility for the success or failure of all civic action programs.¹²⁶ The committee was comprised of senior representatives from each of the departments and agencies primarily concerned with foreign policy and national security matters, General Taylor became its first chairman.

Another organizational change occurred in April 1962 when the President rescinded the directive making the Army the executive agent for civic action. In as much as civic action programs were normally conducted within the framework of the Military Assistance Program, the responsibilities of executive agent logically belonged to the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, to whom the Director of Military Assistance was responsible. The Assistant Secretary of Defense would be a member of the Special Group for Counterinsurgency and would be specifically responsible for relationships with the Agency for International Development, the Peace Corps, and other government agencies having related functions. General Lansdale, as Assistant to the Secretary of Defense, would continue to monitor the program for Secretary McNamara.¹²⁷

The reassignment of the function of executive agent was particularly welcomed by the Air Force. While the Army had served in that capacity, the Secretary of the Air Force had offered the Air Force's services to the Army on a number of occasions, but the Army never accepted these offers. Instead it made a number of relatively unilateral surveys in various countries, and in the resulting recommendations, never fully exploited the special capabilities and resources air power had to offer. The Air Force could now anticipate increased demands for its participation in civic actions.¹²⁸

Almost simultaneously with the issuance of these Presidential guidelines and the establishment of funding and organizational provisions for civic action, a new book entitled *People's War, People's Army* was published in Hanoi in an English edition.

Its author was General Vo Nguyen Giap, vice premier, defense minister, and army commander in chief of North Vietnam. The book was a study of popular warfare and purported to be a communist insurrection manual for use in underdeveloped regions of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. It was complete with "lessons" in preparing for wars of national liberation. Throughout the book Giap emphasized the need for the revolutionary army to keep close to the people and gain grass roots support. "The people are to the army what water is to fish," Giap wrote, quoting Mao Tse-tung without attribution.¹²⁹ Among the techniques mentioned for gaining popular allegiance were ones similar to those proposed for U.S. forces engaged in civic action. It now seemed the appropriate time to beat the communists at their own game.¹³⁰ Publication of the book at the very time that President Kennedy began a more concerted effort to implement an American civic action program served to spur the military into action. And within the Defense Department, civic action became one of the more frequently mentioned phrases whenever the subject of counter-guerrilla warfare was broached.¹³¹

Early in 1962, U.S. Air Force interest in civic action began to balloon as President Kennedy made known his displeasure with the lagging military effort in the counterinsurgency field. Specifically, with regard to civic action, the President became

concerned that the United States was passing up an opportunity to take full advantage of the contribution that military forces could make in less developed countries.¹³² In a letter to McNamara he stated that he would "like the Department of Defense to move to a new level of increased activity across the board."¹³³ And in the Air Force, the Vice Chief of Staff instructed the Air Staff to "get with the program."¹³⁴

Initially, in answer to the President's request, the Air Force tripled its operational resources designed specifically for counterinsurgency operations. The Chief of Staff followed with a policy statement to insure that civic action was accepted as a part of the organization, training, and doctrine of the Air Force. The Air Force also undertook a thorough review of the training program for officers enrolled in the Academy and throughout the Air Force school system to insure that its educational programs adequately emphasized the economic and political aspects of guerrilla warfare. After negotiations with the Army, it obtained eighteen spaces for Air Force officers at the counterinsurgency school established earlier at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. At the same time the Air Force assigned a special task group within the directorate of plans to identify additional ways in which it could increase its capability in this area.¹³⁵

In February 1962 the Air Force Chief of Staff approved a plan to augment and direct attention to the counterinsurgency capability of air power. Subsequently, measures were taken to develop special equipment, tactics, and skills; to orient and train personnel; and to improve the collection of operational intelligence.¹³⁶ In April the United States Air Force Special Air Warfare Center was organized at Eglin AFB, under the command of Brig. Gen. Gilbert L. Pritchard. The 4400th Combat Crew Training Squadron—which at Gen. LeMay's request was expanded to group size, becoming the 1st Air Commando Group—in addition to a new 1st Combat Applications Group, provided the nucleus for the new center. The latter group assumed responsibilities for developing the doctrine, tactics, procedures, and equipment to be employed by the Air Force in counterinsurgency operations. On April 27 the warfare center and its two subordinate groups became operational, with an increased strength of 861 personnel and 82 aircraft.¹³⁷ As the Vietnamese conflict escalated, the demand for the center's special operations grew proportionately. By the summer of 1962, non-volunteer personnel were being assigned to the Special Air Warfare Center. Between July and December 1962, the group's Farm Gate detachment in Vietnam flew 752 airlift, 19 B-26, 104 T-28, and 97 U-10B sorties in support of the Army's special forces. Farm Gate itself was augmented in January 1963, and in July 1963, the 1st Air Commando Group was again expanded and redesignated the 1st Air Commando Wing.¹³⁸

Utilizing the resources and assistance of both the Army's special forces and the Air Force's air commandos, the South Vietnamese under-took a major civic action effort in the spring of 1962. The previous year the Staley mission had called for "crash programs" of economic and social development. The final mission report had recommended both a revival of the faltering agrovillage program as well as the construction of "strategic" hamlets and villages.¹³⁹ In a more sophisticated way the Taylor mission had also confirmed the need for governmental reforms, civic action, and rural development.¹⁴⁰ The results of these two fact finding visits, together with the earlier determination by a U.S. Army civic action mobile training team that the South Vietnamese armed forces did, in fact, possess the ability to perform civic actions, led to the publication of an eleven-point accord to govern a comprehensive new civic action

program, Signed in Saigon on January 2, 1962, by both American and Vietnamese officials, the agreement called for the training of village officials to improve administration in those areas where the government had the closest contact with the people. It also advocated a broad based rural health program, in addition to programs for pest eradication, public education, road construction, village communications systems, and other public works.¹⁴¹ Based on this declaration, President Diem reorganized the Vietnamese Department of Civic Action. He created both a centralized Civic Action Service in Saigon by combining related and heretofore separate services within the Department as well as an integrated Civic Action Office in each, province and district.¹⁴²

The United States agreed to assist the Vietnamese government with the new program through the Rural Affairs section of the Agency for International Development and by attaching military advisors to each of Vietnam's forty-five mainland provinces. This initial support was followed in April with the dispatch of several hundred American soldiers informally called "Matadors"—short for Military Advisory Training Assistance, or MATA. They were the first graduates of the Army's new Special Warfare School (in which the Air Force had obtained training slots) and were assigned to the American military command in Vietnam.¹⁴³

The creation of the Matador organization marked the beginning of a new phase in the South Vietnamese struggle in two ways. First, these new advisors were required to work with the South Vietnamese army at the battalion level. This put them in closer proximity to the enemy and thereby in greater danger of being killed or wounded. Previously, American soldiers had worked only at regimental and divisional levels. Moreover, they were now authorized to shoot when shot at. Dispatching these men thus represented a willingness by the United States to make a greater military commitment.¹⁴⁴ This was reinforced by the fact that they arrived in Vietnam one month after the Military Assistance Advisory Group was replaced by a full military field command. Designated the Military Assistance Command, the new organization signified the beginning of America's direct involvement in the war.¹⁴⁵ Secondly, the Matadors stressed civic action as a major job. Once in Vietnam, they tried to win greater villager support for the South Vietnamese government forces by improving the capability of the Vietnamese civil guards and self-defense corps personnel to protect peasants from Viet Cong assaults and by showing them how to build roads or make parachute drops.¹⁴⁶ This emphasis on civic action as a key function of American troops reflected the growing acceptance among Pentagon officials that the central objective of the Vietnamese struggle hinged on "pacification" of the countryside.¹⁴⁷ The real South Vietnamese-American civic action effort during this early period, however, focused on a strategic hamlet program.¹⁴⁸ In spite of all the previous talk about the need for political, economic, and civic actions in addition to military victories to defeat the Viet Cong, this new counterinsurgency plan represented the first large-scale, comprehensive effort involving all these operations.¹⁴⁹ It was developed during the spring of 1962 by the U.S. Country Team, a Vietnamese government committee, and Brigadier General Robert K. G. Thompson, head of the British advisory mission in Saigon. Having had first-hand experience in the British resettlement efforts during the Malayan insurgency, Thompson found sufficient similarities between conditions in Malaya and those in South Vietnam to warrant the application of similar techniques. But while these tactics proved highly successful in Malaya and eventually spelled defeat for the Chinese communist insurgents there, it

came only after twelve long years. Nevertheless, hopes were high in Saigon for a rapid end to the crisis. Not only did Ngo Dinh Nhu personally supervise the program, but President Diem himself staked the reputation of his administration on its success.¹⁵⁰ Moreover, the United States, regarding it as a vital counterinsurgency operation, became its prime supporter. Implementation of the plan marked the first time, in fact, that the South Vietnamese government accepted any American backed plan for pacification of the country.¹⁵¹

South Vietnam initiated the strategic hamlet program in Binh Duong Province and in the communist-infested Mekong River delta, the richest region in the country. Operations Sunrise and Delta served as the respective code names. In May a third effort, known as Operation Sea Swallow, got underway in Phu Yen Province. The central objective of the enterprise was to deprive the Viet Cong guerrillas of access to the villages, and thereby deny them the ability to extort or cajole recruits, equipment supplies, and intelligence information from the peasants. The hamlets were also expected to serve as funnels through which U.S. aid supported programs of development could reach the rural populace. In this fashion and by the introduction of democratic practices of self-government in the villages, it was hoped that the bulk of the Vietnamese people would gain confidence in and rally to the active support of the government. As in the earlier agrovillage program, therefore, the plan of operations was to concentrate the villagers of a number of hamlets into fortified towns. Once the larger villages were established, civic action teams, manned by the military would go into action, bringing with them tranquility, security, and stability.¹⁵² Like an oil blot beginning at the coast and gradually engulfing the mountains and jungle, governmental control would gradually spread over the sixteen thousand villages and hamlets of South Vietnam. The Viet Cong would be restricted to poorer sections and forced to raid the hamlets to seize food and supplies. This would supposedly make the guerrillas the enemies of the people and frustrate their efforts to pose as protectors. Eventually the insurgency would be put down using the very same techniques the communists had used so successfully against the French.¹⁵³

Two types of strategic hamlets were planned. One, designed for use in areas dominated by guerrillas, called for physical relocation of the population to well-secured areas, surrounded by a wide ditch, a mud embankment with bamboo spikes, and barbed wire. These hamlets differed from the agrovilles both by housing fewer people and by being situated closer to the rice fields. This type went into operation in Binh Duong and in the delta. The other, for use in more secure regions, was built by simply enlarging and fortifying already existing villages. Some thinly inhabited sections would have no strategic villages at all, but would be shielded only by militia stationed in strategically located stone watchtowers.¹⁵⁴

Operation Sunrise, the pilot project involving the relocation of 1,200 families, began on March 22 with a military sweep of a Viet Cong-dominated area in Binh Duong Province, thirty-eight miles northwest of Saigon. This area formed a link between supplies from the Cambodian border and Phuoc Thanh Province, the major Viet Cong stronghold in South Vietnam. Once the military sweep was completed the peasants were rounded up, their dwellings burned, and their possessions stacked onto ox-carts. They were then directed to Ben Tuong, a cleared area on the edge of a rubber plantation. Only thirty-five percent of the families went willingly—some 350 families in all. The rest were forcibly moved. As the refugees entered the cleared area, they were greeted by civic action teams, considered the key to the whole plan. The teams

were composed of fifteen to twenty members representing most of the social services that could be offered to the peasants: medical aid, food, education, information (including pro-government and anticommunist propaganda), entertainment, and advice on such things as home building, road, bridge, and well construction, and sanitation. For protection against minor attacks, young men of the village were trained and supplied with arms to form a self defense force for use once the regular military had left. The people could leave the area to work their fields in the daytime, but at night a curfew brought them back to the villages.¹⁵⁵

Similar events occurred later in other areas, and civic action efforts extended throughout the length of South Vietnam. By the summer of 1963, more than 7,500 villages had been visited by such military teams. As a result, most of these settlements had their first elections (for village chiefs and councils) and had received at least minimal government help on schools, health, and agriculture. Gradually such villages were drawn into the country's governmental network. During June 1963, for instance, Vietnamese military medical teams treated an estimated 30,000 sick or injured civilians. This was three times the number treated in the early spring and an increase from zero the year before.¹⁵⁶ That the teams were successful and were regarded as a threat by the Viet Cong is illustrated by the fact that guerrillas reacted violently toward them. They slaughtered many team members and often beheaded efficient or popular administrators team members had helped to train.¹⁵⁷

The American role in Operation Sunrise was vast and was coordinated by a special country team formed by Ambassador Nolting. The United States Operations mission, which represented the Agency for International Development in Vietnam, supported it with some \$274,000. The money was used for food, shelter, clothing, seeds, pesticides, livestock, medical supplies, tools, and everything else needed for an efficient, secure community. Small radio transmitters were even purchased for each hamlet so it could call for reinforcements if it were attacked by a Viet Cong force too large for it to handle. The money was dispensed through a socially-established and U.S. controlled Rural Rehabilitation Committee.¹⁵⁸

The United States Information Service was also involved. It worked with the Vietnamese armed forces and ministry of information in an extensive propaganda effort. Before the operation began, villagers were warned over loudspeakers of the impending military operations in the area as well as the government's intent to regroup them elsewhere. Leaflets and psychological warfare officers explained that their old settlements had no doctor and no schools, that the Viet Cong conscripted their rice and made them sabotage roads, and that when forced to work for the communists, they were often victims of government bombs and bullets. Villagers were assured however, they would be safe in their new location. Once they had been relocated, a propaganda effort was launched to convince the new settlers that their government was really working hard to improve living standards and hence deserved their unqualified assistance—to the extent of informing, on communist agents and even shooting them down if necessary.¹⁵⁹

The largest American role in Operation Sunrise; and in the general pacification effort throughout the country, however, was performed by the military. American officers helped initially to plan the undertaking and later supplied technical advice and such necessary military material as barbed wire, guns, grenades, and flares. Some military people functioned as civil field personnel, Army officers helped train the civil guard, the self defense corps, and the village militia and taught them various

civic action techniques. By the summer of 1963 there were four thirteen-man American civic action teams advising Vietnamese civic action personnel. There were 135 U.S. military medical technicians deeply involved in the program. And there were thousands of American advisors who helped in various ways from the sideline, while they advised on combat operations.¹⁶⁰ Many, like Army Major Robert J. Kelly, described the work as "the most rewarding, exciting, and eye-opening experience that I have ever had. During an interview he explained why:

The reason this job gets a hold on you is that you can see things getting better before your very eyes. You can feel the Vietnamese trusting you more each day.... When I first came here eight months ago, the rice was yellow and sickly. There was only one crop a year. The rats were so fierce that they ate up 80 percent of the rice before it could be harvested. The people here were scared and desperate and half - starving. We had to import rice from the Delta, But then we went to work. We started a rat-eradication program and a fertilizer program. The U.S. operational mission came in and showed them how to use the fertilizer. We built pigsties and brought in pigs and lent them for breeding. We showed them how to make compost out of pig manure so they could make their own fertilizer. Pretty soon they will be close to self sufficient in fertilizer and will be exporting pigs. And just take a look at those beautiful green, thick, high stalks of rice!¹⁶¹

Air Force personnel, too, became involved in civic action and supported the strategic hamlets in various ways, The Second Air Division, the Air Force supervisory unit established in Vietnam in October 1962, operated numerous dispensaries which not only treated its own personnel but had responsibility for thousands of Vietnamese civilians who lived near the "jungle hospitals" or in areas where battles took place. For example, the 6220th Air Force Dispensary near Saigon, staffed by one surgeon and a four-man surgical team, treated an average of 1,700 patients each month in 1963. And the majority of these cases were civilian.¹⁶²

American pilots also provided reconnaissance and protective support while the strategic hamlets were being constructed and later played a large role in guarding the villages at night (the time for most guerrilla activity) by dropping flares to ward off would-be intruders or to provide enough light for successful counterattacks on a besieged hamlet.¹⁶³ Air commandos remained on-call throughout the night, and by early 1963, most Viet Cong attacks on hamlets were being met by flare-dropping planes and strafing B-26s. After the Viet Cong began their major offensive against the villages, as many as twenty or thirty were often struck in one night. The U.S. built radios proved of great value to these threatened Vietnamese villages. Before they were installed, the response to a call for reinforcements would take anywhere from two to seven hours. The use of radios and air transport narrowed this to between fifteen and fifty minutes. Knowledge that a call for help brought a quick response had a tremendous psychological impact on the village inhabitants. Gen. Harkins later told Air Force Secretary Eugene Zuckert that "no outpost, no fortified hamlet, no armed convoy had been successfully overcome by the Viet Cong where there was air cover."¹⁶⁴

But the Air Force's largest and most vital role in the pacification program was one of airlift: ferrying food, weapons, and supplies in and evacuating emergency

medical cases. In many areas the Diem government had to abandon completely the use of roads and rail lines because of enemy ambush. This was especially prevalent in Viet Cong-dominated zones near the North Vietnamese border.¹⁶⁵ In these areas aerial support was required to set up the strategic hamlets initially and then to keep them resupplied later. Sometimes the entire population of a threatened village had to be transported to a secure area. In such cases, in addition to the personal effects of the people involved, livestock and other property would have to be moved as well.¹⁶⁶ To handle most of these demands for airlift, the United States sent two C-123 squadrons to Tan Son Nhut and Da Nang Air Bases on an operation called "Mule Train." These cargo planes bore American markings and were flown strictly by Americans. They worked in conjunction with the air commandos' C-47 craft.

The intensive demand for air deliveries led to several significant innovations. After considerable research the 1st Combat Applications Group of the Special Air Warfare Center developed a system of aerial resupply used by the C-123 to deliver up to 15,000 pounds of cargo at precise locations without having to land. This was especially useful in those remote hamlets without landing field nearby.¹⁶⁷ Before this improvement was made, many of the supplies intended for outposts were recovered by the Viet Cong. Another problem successfully overcome was that of providing fresh meat to isolated villages. It was solved by loading live cows, pigs, and chickens onto aircraft and then free-falling them from several hundred feet. The animals were dead upon arrival, but the meat was fresh and it had required no refrigeration en route.¹⁶⁸ Air Force personnel also helped to build up a better relationship between the people and the central government in their psychological warfare efforts. During the Sunrise operation alone, American pilots helped drop some 24,000 propaganda leaflets, designed to influence those peasants with uncommitted loyalties. In the spring of 1963 Diem instituted an "open arms" (Chieu Hoi) surrender campaign modeled after the amnesty program used in the Philippines. American Air Force personnel supported the program by dropping leaflets on enemy positions or broadcasting messages to encourage Viet Cong defections. Within a year more than 12, 000 persons had returned to the government side. The leaflet program was also used within the hamlets themselves to shore up support for the government. Leaflets describing civic action activities and plans for the local People were printed and distributed. Each was marked with a "lucky scorecard number." After several days, to assure that the people had kept the leaflets around the house, drawings were held, with kitchen utensils for the winners.¹⁶⁹

Although the strategic hamlet program enjoyed considerable American support and represented the largest single counterinsurgency operation of the Diem regime, it, like its predecessor program, failed to achieve the intended result. It did avoid the concentration-camp brutality of the agrovilles, which often packed more than 20,000 into each stockaded area, yet people were still herded into the villages against their wills and often under conditions of duress. In many instances almost all able-bodied men fled the hamlets, and many joined the Viet Cong rebels, either voluntarily or at the point of a gun. This drained the hamlets of the very people who could have protected the women, children, and elderly from guerrilla harassment. In the Ben Tuong hamlet, for example, out of some 866 families, only 120 were males of age to bear arms.¹⁷⁰ Psychological warfare teams did air drop thousands of pamphlets and leaflets promising amnesty and rewards (\$21 and a plot of land) to those who had fled, but there were only a portion who returned. The situation was further complicated by

the fact that some of the villages did not have enough arms and equipment; over one half lacked radios.¹⁷¹ The problem of hamlet security, then, was one of the major problems with which the pacification program had to deal, and the Viet Cong did not waste time in taking advantage of this weakness.¹⁷² Ben Tuong, the showplace of the entire strategic hamlet program, was overrun by the communists on August 20, 1963. The attacking guerrillas met practically no resistance. Other poorly defended hamlets fared little better.¹⁷³

The strategic hamlets also faced the problem of inadequate civic action support. At this time the United States still regarded civic action as something to be carried out by indigenous military personnel. Americans often helped train and organize civic action teams, but Vietnamese usually manned the program. In most cases the teams employed in the hamlets made sincere efforts to help the people; at other times team efforts failed because of a lack of national backing or because the team was employed as a labor force rather than in its civic action capacity. Many times a hamlet school would be established only to find a teacher was not available. Likewise medical supplies were often available in quantity, but civic action medical personnel were scarce because the government would not provide for their salaries. In some places there was not enough money to pay the villagers for the time they spent building the villages and maintaining their defenses. It was hard for villagers to find the hamlets appealing under such circumstances.¹⁷⁴

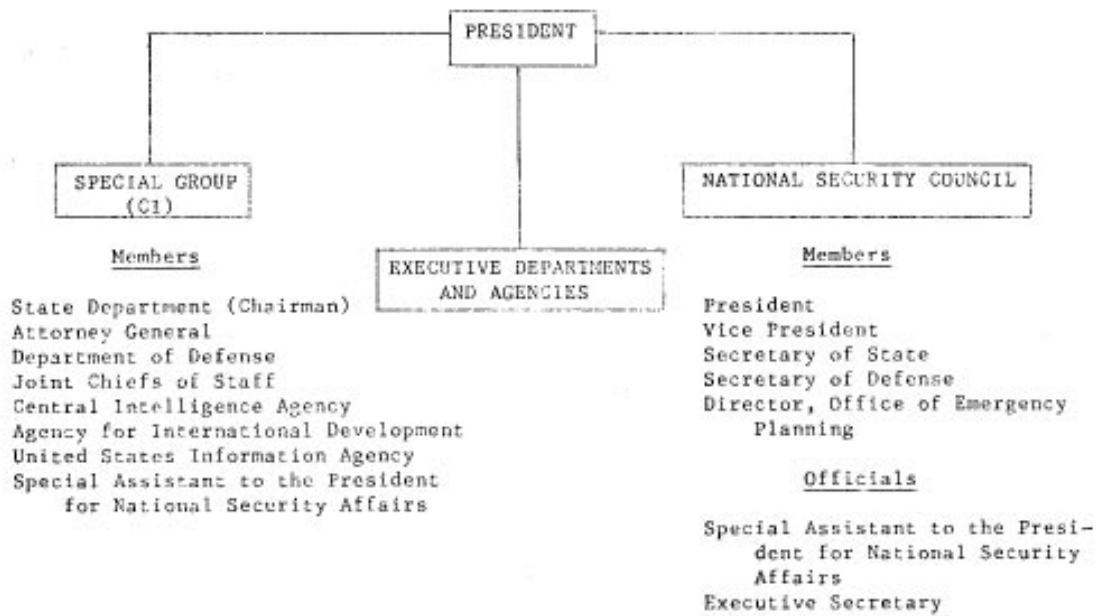
Throughout the life of the strategic hamlet program, the governments of both the United States and Vietnam remained overly optimistic. Many U.S. officers with experience as advisors in South Vietnam believed that the success of the undertaking would dictate success in the war itself. Gen. Paul Harkins was one of them. "All these people want is a chance to work their fields and to live in peace," he said in March 1963. "The strategic hamlet program is affording them a security almost hitherto unknown, and they welcome it." As late as August, he was still predicting a Viet Cong loss based on his forecast of the program's success.¹⁷⁵ This view was shared by Ambassador Nolting and communicated to policymakers in Washington.¹⁷⁶ Such statements as the one made by the State Department's Roger Hilsman, Jr., were fairly common: "I thought it likely before that Diem would beat the Viet Cong, but now, with the new program, I think it will be easy."¹⁷⁷ In July 1962 and again in October 1963, the United States determined that the hamlets had stabilized the situation to such an extent that a partial withdrawal of U.S. forces could be considered. Inundated with optimistic reports, Americans tended to ignore warnings that the program had serious defects and consequently failed to take remedial action.¹⁷⁸

In Vietnam, egged on by Nhu who insisted on quantity and an unrealistic schedule, province chiefs competed with one another to build fences around their hamlets, and many officials falsified records to reflect completed hamlets when, in actuality, little had been done.¹⁷⁹ One senior U.S. advisor reported that the concept of strategic hamlets was good, It was in general well-adapted to conditions and could have been adjusted as necessary. "But the execution left much to be desired. The prevailing pattern was one of hamlets that were hamlets in name only."¹⁸⁰ On October 1, 1962, however, only seven months after the program had been started, President Diem told the Vietnamese National Assembly that more than 7 million Vietnamese were "living in safety" and that a goal of 600 strategic hamlets per month had been set. By the end of October 1963, an announced 8,000 hamlets had been built. Later investigations, however, revealed that only twenty percent of these had actually been

secured.¹⁸¹ As a result, government supplies, weapons, ammunition, and radios which were funneled into the "completed" villages often ended up in Viet Cong hands. Only in small areas in central Vietnam did the program significantly improve the peasant's life or offer him real security. Consequently Vietnamese peasants on the whole rejected the program, although approximately 161,000 of an estimated half million Montagnard tribesmen (non-Vietnamese mountain-dwelling people) grew tired of Viet Cong exactions and came out of the hills, asking the government for help and protection. These were resettled in fortified hamlets in the strategically located northern and central highlands, and they responded very favorably to the government's civic action program.¹⁸²

On November 1, 1963, a military coup toppled the administration, and both Diem and Nhu were assassinated. The Viet Cong, taking advantage of the chaos incident to the change of national power, moved in on the few viable hamlets and virtually destroyed all the hospitals, roads, and schools which had been established.¹⁸³ For the first time the United States became aware of the program's failure, but by this time it was too late. The strategic hamlets had failed, but the idea of pacification—combining village security with civic action—remained very much alive. With certain improvements and with American aid and support, pacification would still become the basis of a grand national strategy.

SPECIAL GROUP (COUNTERINSURGENCY)



CIVIC ACTION FUNDING FOR FISCAL YEAR 1962

<u>Country</u>	<u>Military Assistance Program (MAP)</u>	<u>Agency for International Development (AID)</u>	<u>Total U. S. Cost</u>
Bolivia	---	\$1,700,000	\$1,700,000
Brazil	\$2,220,000	300,000	2,520,000
Burma	750,000	500,000	1,250,000
Chile	860,000	200,000	1,060,000
Ecuador	900,000	700,000	1,600,000
Honduras	---	100,000	100,000
Iran	1,221,000	*	1,221,000+
Jordan	*	100,000	100,000+
Korea	3,139,600	1,500,000	4,639,600
Paraguay	---	200,000	200,000
Peru	1,135,000	100,000	1,235,000
Vietnam	<u>3,900,000</u>	<u>---</u>	<u>3,900,000</u>
TOTAL	\$14,125,600+	\$5,400,000+	\$19,525,600+

* Less than \$50,000

Source: Army Study (U), Dir/Civil Affairs, US Army, Subj: Military Civic Action, 1963, Appendix A.

CIVIC ACTION FUNDING FOR FISCAL YEAR 1963

<u>Country</u>	<u>Military Assistance Program (MAP)</u>	<u>Agency for International Development (AID)</u>	<u>Total U. S. Cost</u>
Bolivia	1,817,000	2,005,000	3,822,000
Brazil	2,156,000	207,000	2,363,000
Burma	---	250,000	250,000
Cambodia	792,000	173,000	965,000
Chile	2,019,000	118,000	2,137,000
Colombia	1,488,000	822,000	2,310,000
Dom. Republic	596,000	351,000	947,000
Ecuador	323,000	---	323,000
El Salvador	534,000	100,000	634,000
Guatemala	863,000	587,000	1,450,000
Honduras	84,000	103,000	187,000
Indonesia	2,887,000	1,200,000	4,087,000
Iran	404,000	198,000	602,000
Jordan	1,276,000	900,000	2,176,000
Korea	385,000	1,750,000	2,135,000
Liberia	463,000	---	463,000
Nicaragua	59,000	---	59,000
Pakistan	7,000	---	7,000
Paraguay	840,000	700,000	1,540,000
Peru	2,794,000	---	2,794,000
Philippines	930,000	---	930,000
Senegal	183,000	---	183,000
Somalia	229,000	---	229,000
Thailand	3,617,000	---	3,617,000
Uruguay	546,000	---	546,000
Vietnam	35,343,000*	1,400,000	36,743,000
TOTAL	\$60,636,000	\$10,864,000	\$71,500,000

*Includes \$33,000,000 for Strategic Hamlet program

Source: Army Study (U), Dir/Civil Affairs, US Army, Subj: Military Civic Action, 1963, Appendix A.

ORGANIZATION FOR CIVIC ACTION

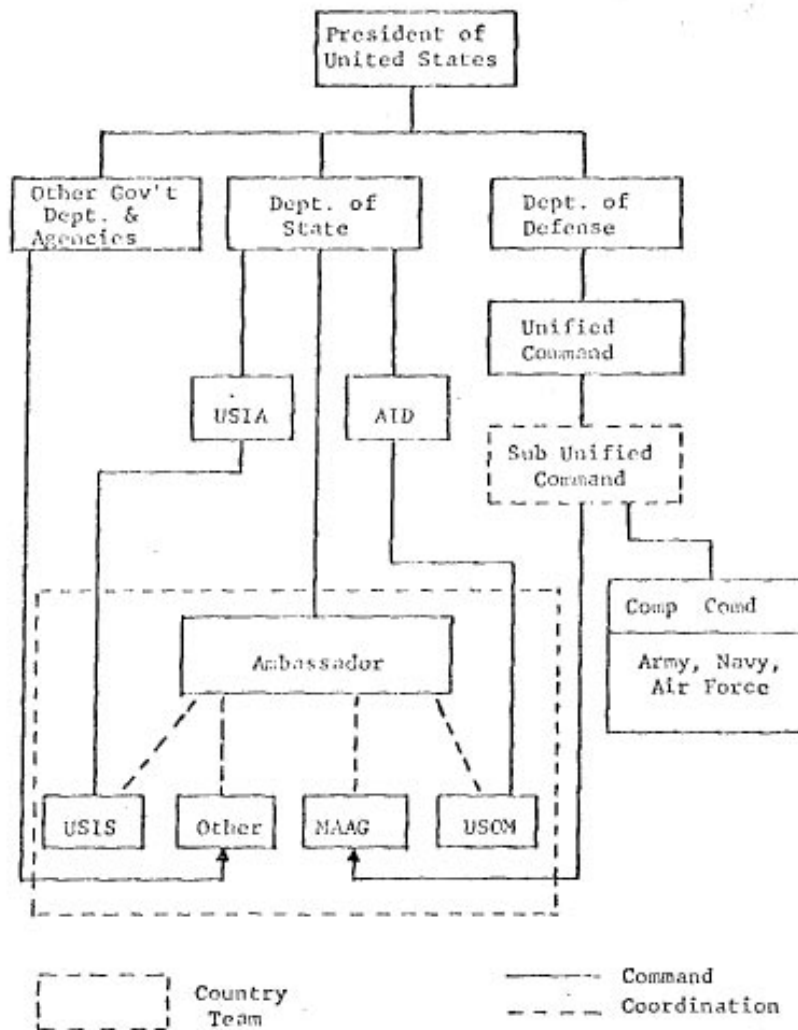


Figure 1. Organization of the Country Team and Relationship to Other Agencies.

Source: A Guide to Military Civic Action (300th Civil Affairs Group)

NOTES

Chapter II: The Search for Definitions and Applications

1. Quoted in Hugh Hanning, *The Peaceful Uses of Military Forces* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967), p. 217.
2. U.S. Department of State, "Viet Cong Terror Tactics in South Viet-Nam," *Viet-Nam Information Notes* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1968), p. 1; A Program of Action, *Gravel Pentagon Papers*, II, 35; Robert J. Donovan, "Would Reds Gobble S. Viet Nam Next?" *New York Herald Tribune*, Apr. 4, 1961.
3. "Control of the countryside brought great resources to the Viet Cong: rice, seafood, fruit, and other crops of the immensely productive rural areas," Donovan, "Would Reds Gobble S. Viet Nam Next?"
4. U.S. Department of State, "A Threat to the Peace: North Viet-Nam's Effort to Conquer South Viet-Nam." Department of State Publication 7308 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1961). Part II, pp. 1-2.
5. U.S. Department of State, "Communist-Directed Forces in South Viet-Nam," *Viet-Nam Information Notes*, No. 3, Publication 8197 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1968), p. 6.
6. "Little Man Who Stands Tall in Vietnam," *Newsweek*, May 22, 1961, p. 37.
7. Bernard B. Fall, *The Two Viet-Nams: A Political and Military Analysis* (New York: Praeger, 1964), p. 369.
8. Cited in Robert P. Martin, "U.S. Bungle in Vietnam: The Inside Story," *U.S. News and World Report*, Sep. 14, 1964, p. 25. The head of the Michigan State University Advisory Group to Vietnam also stated in 1958 that South Vietnam could be classed as "one of the most stable and peaceful countries of Asia today." Bernard B. Fall, "South Viet-Nam (1956-Nov 1963)" in Condit, *Challenge and Response in Internal Conflict*, p. 353.
9. Sullivan, *Vietnam War: Conduct and Higher Direction*, p. 86.
10. Cable, Saigon 538, Ambassador Durbrow to Sec. of State, Sep. 5, 1960, p. 1. in Department of Defense, *United States-Vietnam Relations, 1945-1967*, Vol 2, pt. iv, A.5. Tab 4, p. 54; Fall, "South Viet-Nam," p. 357, The United States had supported the agrovillage plan with both money and equipment at an estimated value of some \$200 million. Sullivan, *Vietnam War: Conduct and Higher Direction*, p. 86.
11. Hilsman, *To Move a Nation*, p. 419; Condit, *Challenge and Response in Internal Conflict*, p. 353, As Bernard Fall has noted, Diem regarded his government as "the true expression of Vietnamese nationalism and revolution, and was reluctant to admit the existence of an insurgency similar to that which had confronted the French." He consequently mistook the beginning of the Viet Cong insurgency for the last phases of the Viet Minh revolt. Fall, "South Viet-Nam," p. 353.
12. "Viet-Nam: Crucial Testing Ground for Freedom," *Armed Forces Information and Education for Commanders* 1 (Aug 1, 1961), p. 3. Paul Ramsey puts the 1960-1961 figure of Viet Cong murders at 6,130 and abducted at 6,213. "Proportionately," he says, "this is as if the U.S. were under subversive assault in which 72,000 prominent persons, crucial in the life of the nation and its community services, were murdered or abducted annually!" See Paul Ramsey, "How Shall Counter-Insurgency War Be Conducted Justly" in Paul T. Menzel, editor, *Moral Argument and the War in Vietnam* (Nashville, Tenn: Aurora Publishers, 1971), p. 98.

13. "The Situation in Vietnam—A Personal Report by the Chief, MAAG, Vietnam," by Lionel C. McGarr, Lt. Gen. USA, Chief, for Admiral H. D. Felt, Commander in Chief, Pacific, Feb. 3, 1961; intvw, Maj. Richard B. Clement and Dr. James C. Hasdorff with Frederick E. Nolting, Jr., Ambassador to South Vietnam, 1961-1963, Nov. 9, 1971; U.S. Department of State, "Viet-Nam: Free-World Challenge in Southeast Asia." Publication 7388 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, June 1962). pp. 7-8.
14. Special NIE, Aug 23, 1960 (SNIE 63al-60), p. 1, in Department of Defense, *United States-Vietnam Relations, 1945-1967*, Vol. 2, pt iv, A.5, Tab 4. p. 50.
15. Cable, Saigon 624 to Sec. of State, Section 2 of 2, Sep. 16, 1960, pp. 1-3, in Department of Defense, *United States-Vietnam Relations, 1945-1967*, Vol. 2, pt. iv, A.5, Tab 4, p. 57.
16. Memo for Admiral E. J. O'Donnell, Regional Director, Far East, ISA, from Brig. Gen. Edward G. Lansdale, OSOIOSD, subj: Possible Course of Action in Vietnam, Sep. 13, 1960, p. 2, in *United States-Vietnam Relations, 1945-1967*, Vol. 2, pt. iv, A.5, Tab 4, p. 53.
17. Commentary, *Gravel Pentagon Papers*, I, 258.
18. Presidential Task Force Report, "A Program of Action to Prevent Communist Domination of South Vietnam," Apr. 26, 1961.
19. Robert S. McNamara, "United States Policy in Viet-Nam," Armed Forces Information and Education for Commanders 3 (Apr. 15, 1964), p. 3; "Little Man Who Stands Tall," p. 37; "Viet-Nam: Crucial Testing Ground," p. 4.
20. Inaugural Address, Jan 20, 1961, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Kennedy, 1961*, p. 1; Commentary, *Gravel Pentagon Papers*, II, p. 1.
21. Hilsman, *To Move a Nation*, p. 413.
22. United States Air Force, Background Brief and Analysis of Southeast Asia Study Group Preliminary Report, Oct. 25, 1961, p. 2.
23. "Viet-Nam: Crucial Testing Ground," p. 1.
24. William P. Bundy, Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, Address before Washington Chamber of Commerce, Washington, D.C., Jan. 23, 1965, in *Department of State Bulletin*, Feb 8, 1965. p. 171.
25. George W. Ball, Under Secretary of State, "Vietnam: Free-World Challenge in Southeast Asia." p. 9; see also Donovan, "Would Reds Gobble S. Viet Nam Next?"
26. "Guidelines for U.S. Policy and operations in the Far East," Attachment to Memo, George C. McGhee, United States State Department, to Henry Rowen, Dept. of Defense, Aug 14, 1961.
27. Gen Vo Nguyen Giap, Commander in Chief of the North Vietnamese forces remarked in 1964, "South Viet-Nam is the example for national liberation movements of our time.... If it proves possible to defeat the 'Special Warfare' tested in South Viet-Nam by the American imperialists, this will mean that it can be defeated everywhere else as well." Cited in U.S. Department of State, "Wars of National Liberation," *Viet-Nam Information Notes*, No 12 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1968). p. 4; James Farmer, *Counterinsurgency: Principles and Practices in Viet-Nam* P-3039 (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, Dec. 1964), pp. 31-32.
28. "Viet-Nam: Crucial Testing Ground," p. 2.
29. Testimony of Robert S. McNamara before Committee on Foreign Relations, Senate, *International Development and Security*, 87th Cong., 1st sess., 1961, p. 593; Curtis E. LeMay, "Counter-Insurgency and the Challenge Imposed," *The Airman*, Vol. VI, No. 7 (Jul 62), p. 2.

30. Hilsman, *To Move a Nation*, pp. 413-15.
31. Memo for Sec. of Defense from Brig. Gen. Lansdale, OSO/OSD, subj: Vietnam, Jan. 17, 1961, reprinted in Department of Defense, *United States-Vietnam Relations, 1945-1967*, Vol. 2, pt. iv, A.5. Tab 4. p. 66.
32. Lansdale Report on Vietnam, *Gravel Pentagon Papers*, II, 25-26; Betts, *Soldiers, Statement and Cold War Crises*, pp. 22-23.
33. Intvw, Maj. Richard B. Clement and Jacob Van Staaveren with Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor, Jan. 11, 1972; Maxwell D. Taylor, *Swords and Plowshares* (New York: Norton, 1962), pp. 220-21.
34. Walt W. Rostow, *The Diffusion of Power: An Essay in Recent History* (New York: MacMillan, 1972), p. 265. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *A Thousand Days; John F. Kennedy in the White House* (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Publications, 1965) p. 299; Halberstam, *Best and Brightest*, p. 128; Taylor intvw, Jan. 11, 1972; Richard K. Betts, citing a memorandum from Rostow to McGeorge Bundy, writes: "At the time, Rostow wrote that the President said the Lansdale memorandum was the first indication he had of the urgency of the Vietnam situation." See Leslie H. Gelb and Richard K. Betts, *The Irony of Vietnam: The System Worked* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institute, 1979), pp. 69-70.
35. The Counterinsurgency Plan, *Gravel Pentagon Papers*, II, pp. 6, 23-25.
36. Department of Defense, *Annual Report for Fiscal Year 1961* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1961), p. 3.
37. Lyndon Johnson, nonetheless, reports that the President "did not rule out sending limited forces into the Mekong Valley" in Laos and actually alerted military units on Okinawa early in his administration. See Lyndon B. Johnson, *The Vantage Point: Perspectives of the Presidency, 1963-1969* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), p. 52. During his first months in office however, the President clearly opposed American combat involvement. See Halberstam, *Best and Brightest*, p. 129.
38. Nolting intvw, Nov. 9, 1971.
39. Special Air Warfare Force Analysis, Dir/Plans, USAF, Mar. 1, 1967, p. II-1.
40. Hildreth, "USAF Counterinsurgency Doctrines and Capabilities," p. 4.
41. Intvw, Alnwick with Lansdale; Taylor intvw, Jan. 11, 1972.
42. Hugh Hanning, "Defense and Development" (Whitehall, London, England: Royal United Service Institution, 1970), p. 21.
43. Memo, Deputy Sec of Def to Sec Army, Navy, Air Force, JCS, CIA, subj: Designation of Brig. Gen. E. G. Lansdale, USAF, As Assistant to the Secretary of Defense, Feb. 24, 1961.
44. Willard F. Barber and C. Neale Ronning, *Internal Security and Military Power* (Columbus: Ohio State Univ Press, 1966), pp. 19-20; Testimony of Sec of State Dean Rusk before Committee on Foreign Relations, Senate, *International Development and Security*, 87th Cong, 1st sess, 1961, p. 31. Remarks by Gen. George H. Decker, Chief of Staff, USA, at Inter-American Army Conference, Panama Canal Zone, Jul. 10, 1961; Bernard B. Fall, "Vietnam: The New Korea." *Current History*, 46 (Feb. 1966), p. 88.
45. As U.S. Secretary of Defense, McNamara said in Montreal, May 1966: "At the beginning of 1958 there were twenty-three prolonged insurgencies going on about the world. As of 1 February 1966 there were forty. Further the number of outbreaks of violence has increased each year: in 1958 there were thirty-four; in 1965 there were fifty-eight. But what is most significant of all is that there is a direct and constant

relationship between the incidence of violence and the economic status of the countries afflicted.... There can, then, be no question that there is an irrefutable relationship between violence and economic backwardness. And the trend of such violence is not down." Quoted in Hanning, "Defense and Development," p. 5.

46. Ltr, Glen W. Martin, USAF Director of Plans to P. F. Hilbert, Deputy for Requirements Review, Under Secretary USAF, no subj, Jan 19, 1961; memo, SAFUS to Deputy Secretary of Defense, subj: Proposed Memorandum to the Secretary of Defense Concerning Military Assistance Policy, Feb. 2, 1961; memo, Col. Frank R. Pancake, USAF Assistant Deputy Director for Policy, Directorate of Plans, subj: Development of Military Civic Action Programs in Foreign Areas, Mar. 30, 1961.

47. USAF Current Operations Plan 11-62, Jul. 28, 1960, pp. 11-12, Annex C, p. 3; Enclosure B to Report by the J-5 to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on Development of Military Civic Action Programs in Foreign Areas (Prepared by W. T. Seeley and J. C. Fralish of the Psychological Operations and Information Branch), Mar. 22, 1961.

48. Hilsman, *To Move a Nation*, pp. 415-16, 578.

49. Lt. Gen. Gabriel P. Disosway and Maj. Gen. William W. Momyer, two future TAC commanders, were included on the team. Rebecca Y. Noell, *Tactical Air Command in Southeast Asia, 1961-1968*, Hq Tactical Air Command, Aug 1972, p. 20.

50. Hilsman, *To Move a Nation*, p. 426.

51. Taylor intvw, Jan. 11, 1972.

52. Intvw, Maj. Samuel E. Riddlebarger and Maj. Richard B. Clement with Elbridge Durbrow, U.S. Ambassador to South Vietnam, 1957-1961, Apr. 27, 1970.

53. Hilsman, *To Move a Nation*, pp. 578-79.

54. Durbrow intvw, Apr. 27, 1970.

55. Roger Hilsman, Director of the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research, and later Kennedy's Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, states that Gen. Lansdale's "experience with the political undercurrents in Vietnam was probably greater than any other American's, as were his sources of information." Hilsman, *To Move a Nation*, p. 421. See also Langguth, "Policy-Making Men in Saigon," p. 29.

56. Taylor intvw, Jan. 11, 1972; intvw, Alnwick with Lansdale.

57. For example see, "The Situation in Vietnam—A Personal Report by the Chief, MAAG, Vietnam," by Lt. Gen. Lionel C. McGarr, USA, Chief, for Admiral H. D. Felt, Commander in Chief, Pacific, Feb. 3, 1961.

58. Department of Defense, *Annual Report for Fiscal Year 1962* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1963), p. 100.

59. Memo, President Kennedy to the Secretary of Defense, Jan. 11, 1962, cited in Special Air Warfare Force Analysis, Dir/Plans, USAF, Mar. 1, 1967, p. II-1.

60. Special Message to the Congress on the Defense Budget, Mar 28, 1961, in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: John F. Kennedy*, 1961, p. 236.

61. Intvw, Alnwick with Lansdale.

62. Hildreth, "USAF Counterinsurgency Doctrines and Capabilities," p. 6.

63. "Guidelines for U.S. Policy and Operations in the Far East." Attachment to Memo for Henry Rowan (DOD) from George C. McGhee (State Department), subj: same as attachment, Aug. 14, 1961. See also comments by Ambassador Robert Komer in W. Scott Thompson and Donaldson D. Frizzell, eds, *The Lessons of Vietnam* (New York: Crane, Russak and Co. 1977), pp. 211-12.

64. Unpublished speech by President John F. Kennedy, cited in John T. Leacacos,

"The Search for and Development of Soldier-Statesmen," *Army*, Apr 63, p. 49; Presidential statement, Apr. 11, 1963, in Department of Defense, Director of Military Assistance, ISA, *U.S. Presidential Statements Relating to Civic Action* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, n.d.).

65. Barber and Ronning, *Internal Security and Military Power*, p. 33.

66. The Alliance for Progress was formally launched in Uruguay on Aug. 16, 1961.

67. H. O. Ekern, "Military Civic Action as an Instrument of Foreign Aid," p. 4.

68. The Peace Corps was created by executive order on Mar. 1, 1961, but on Sep. 22, Congress passed a bill giving it permanent status. For significance of the name "Peace Corps" see Sargent Shriver, "The Peace Corps," *Foreign Affairs*, Jul. 63, p. 695. See also Hearing before Committee on Foreign Relations, Senate, *International Development and Security*, 87th Cong, 1st sess, 1961, p. 39.

69. Ltr, John F. Kennedy to Lyndon B. Johnson, May 26, 1961, in Hearings Before Committee on Foreign Relations, Senate, *International Development and Security*, 87th Cong, 1st sess, 1961), pp. 25-28.

70. Joint State-AID-Defense Msg, Department of State to CINCPAC, *et al*, subj: Civic Action, Feb. 12, 1962.

71. Ekern, "Military Civic Action as an Instrument of Foreign Aid," p. 6; Study, USAF, Technical Information Center, subj: TAC's Proposed Concept for Air Force Special Operations: Analysis, Part I, 1969, p. VI-2; Army Study, Dir/Civil Affairs, USA, subj: Military Civic Action, 1963, p. 1.

72. "The Military as an Aid to Development," Address by Wynne James. Assistant for Civic Action, Department of Defense, at the Panel on Military Development, Seventh World Conference, Society for International Development, Washington, D.C., Mar. 11, 1965; Secret attachment to Memo, for Henry Rowan (DOD) from George C. McGhee, State Department, subj: Guidelines for U.S. Policy and Operations in the Far East, Aug. 14, 1961.

73. *Journal of Mutual Security*, Evaluation Division, USAF, Mar 62, p. 10; Harry F. Walterhouse, *A Time to Build* (Columbia: Univ of South Carolina Press, 1964), p. 37.

74. Memo, for Deputy Directorate of Plans from Col Frank R. Pancake, subj: Development of Military Civic Action Programs in Foreign Areas, Mar 30, 1961; Enclosure A (Draft Msg for CINCARIB, USCINCEUR, and CINCPAC from J-5 1735/404/1, n.d.) to Report by the J-5, to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, subj: Development of Civic Action Programs in Foreign Areas, Mar. 22, 1961.

75. Edward G. Lansdale, "Civic Action Helps Counter the Guerrilla Threat," *Army Information Digest*, Vol. 17, No. 6 (Jun. 1962), p. 52; Maj. Gen. William B. Rosson, "Understanding Civic Action," *Army*, Jul. 1963, p. 46; Raymond A. Moore, Jr., "Toward a Definition of Military Nationbuilding," *Military Review*, Jul. 1973, pp. 40-42.

76. Walterhouse, *A Time to Build*, pp. 13-14.

77. This definition first appeared in a special Glossary of Counterinsurgency Terms Approved by the Special Group (Counterinsurgency), by Interdepartmental Terminology Committee, May 17, 1962.

78. Ekern, "Military Civic Action as an Instrument of Foreign Aid," p. 45.

79. JCS Pub 1, Ch 1, Jul 2, 1962. Italics added.

80. USAF Fact Sheet 68-14, "Civic Action" (Washington, D.C.: Secretary of the Air Force, Office of Information, 1968), pp. 1-2; Address, William R. Swarm, Commandant of U.S. Army Civil Affairs School, Fort Gordon, Georgia, before conference of the

Military Government Assn, Hartford, Conn., Jun. 15, 1962, reprinted in Congressional Record, Aug 10, 1962, p. A6124.

81. Work of the Armed Forces in the Economic and Social Development of the Countries: Military Civic Action (Washington, D.C.: Inter-American Defense Board, 1965), pp. 1-2.

82. Commentary, *Gravel Pentagon Papers*, II, p. 2.

83. *Ibid.*, pp. 37-39, 43.

84. A Program of Action for South Vietnam, *Gravel Pentagon Papers*, II, 638-41; memo, AFXPD-PY to Chief of Staff, USAF, subj: Program of Action for Vietnam, May 17, 1961, and attached Talking Paper.

85. Cited in Paul W. ward, "Viet-Nam Aid to Be Expanded," *Baltimore Sun*, May 5, 1961.

86. Quoted in Johnson, *Vantage Point*, p. 53.

87. Gerald Griffin, "Troops Eyed for Vietnam," *Baltimore Sun*, May 6, 1961; Johnson, *Vantage Point*, p. 52; Gravel commentary on the Johnson mission, *Gravel Pentagon Papers*, II, pp. 55-56.

88. Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations, Senate, *International Development and Security*, 87th Cong., 1st sess. 1961, p. 551.

89. Personal Conclusions from the Mission, *Gravel Pentagon Papers*, II, p. 58.

90. "Seventy-two U.S. Warfare Experts Arrive in So. Viet Nam," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Jun. 13, 1961.

91. Memo for Secretary McNamara and Deputy Secretary Gilpatric from Edward G. Lansdale, Assistant to Secretary of Defense, subj: Defense Resources for Unconventional Warfare, Jul. 12, 1961; William H. Stringer, "State of the Nations: Johnson Follows Through," *Christian Science Monitor*, Jun. 13, 1961.

92. Gen. Theodore R. Milton, USAF (Ret), "USAF and the Vietnam Experience," *Air Force Magazine*, Jun. 12, 1975, p. 12; Tillman Durdin, "Struggle for Southeast Asia," *New York Times*, Oct. 15, 1961.

93. Memo for the Secretaries of the Military Departments, The Director of Defense Research and Engineering, The Chairman of the JCS, The Assistant Secretaries of Defense, The General Counsel, The Assistant to the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense (Legislative Affairs) from Robert S. McNamara, subj: Civic Action Programs, Sep. 5, 1961; ltr, Brig. Gen. Adriel N. Williams, USAF, Deputy Director for Policy, to Maj. Gen. Buchinal, AFXPD, subj: Limited Warfare RDT&E Funds, Aug. 29, 1961.

94. Hist, Dir/Plans, USAF, Jul. 1-Dec. 31, 1961, p. 264.

95. Ltr, Brig. Gen. Adriel N. Williams, USAF, Deputy Director for Policy, Directorate of Plans, DCS/P&P to Mr. Hilbert, SAF/US subj: Civic Action Programs, Sep. 22, 1961.

96. Ltr, Maj. Gen. R. M. Montgomery, USAF, Assistant Vice Chief of Staff to Deputies, Directors, and Chiefs of Comparable Offices, subj: Civic Action Programs, Oct. 31, 1961; hist, Dir/Plans, USAF, Jul. 1-Dec. 31, 1961, p. 259.

97. Memo, for the Secretary of the Army from George S. Robinson, USAF Deputy Special Assistant for Installations, subj: Civic Action Programs, Nov 14, 1961; hist, Dir/Plans, USAF, Jul 1-Dec 31, 1961, p. 259.

98. Report, Secretary of the Air Force to the President, subj: Increased Air Force Capability in SubLimited Warfare, Sep. 22, 1961; intvw, Alnwick with Lansdale; Department of Defense, *Annual Report for Fiscal Year 1964* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1964), p. 22; memo, for Secretary McNamara and Deputy Secretary Gilpatric, from Edward Lansdale, Assistant to Secretary of Defense, Jul. 12, 1961, subj: Defense

Resources for Unconventional Warfare.

99. Appendix to Memo for the Secretary of Defense from L. Lemnitzer, Chairman, JCS, subj: Progress Report on Guerrilla Warfare Matters Raised by the President, Jan. 27, 1962; Special Air Warfare Force Analysis, Dir/Plans, USAF, Mar. 1, 1967, p. II-2; Hildreth, "USAF Counterinsurgency Doctrines and Capabilities," p. 9.
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CHAPTER III

NATION-BUILDING AMID INSTABILITY

Civic action involves the principle of nation-building.... We have seen that principle operate in our own country for many years. By encouraging and helping the Air Forces of friendly governments make their full civic action contribution, we can demonstrate increasingly the superiority of free government on the basis of hard achievements, as well as moral values. In this way our prospects are improved for preventing or relieving the conditions of unrest which could be exploited by insurgent elements in conducting guerrilla operations.

-General Curtis E. LeMay¹

The overthrow of the Diem regime in early November 1963 and the assassination of President Kennedy later that month represented the end of one phase of the South Vietnamese struggle against communist insurgents and the beginning of another. Diem had brought a certain amount of stability and unity to the anti-communist drive. The coup d'etat gave the country a new and uncertain military government and led it into a period of political disorder and instability. The first junta headed by Maj. Gen. Duong Van Minh was itself overthrown on January 30, 1964, in a coup executed by Lt. Gen. Nguyen Khanh. By August 25, students and Buddhists dissatisfied with Khanh's policies resorted to mob violence and forced his resignation as well. The political situation remained unstable through mid-1965. From Diem's overthrow until the end of 1964, for instance, the South Vietnamese saw eight different regimes rise and fall from power in Saigon. There were three between August 16 and September 3. These changes in government were interspersed with numerous abortive coup attempts, heightening the internal confusion in the country.²

While Diem had experienced failure in winning broad support among the Vietnamese, his successors realized even fewer gains. Accusations against the new rulers (military and civilian alike) ranged from "repressive" to "dictatorial."³ To President Johnson these men "often seemed to have a strong impulse toward political suicide."⁴ While they ruled in South Vietnam, the Viet Cong continued to progress militarily, engaging government forces directly, increasing recruitment in the countryside, and stepping up the conflict in general. During the second week following the November coup, for example, incidents of Viet Cong terrorism and sabotage more than tripled, rising from 316 to a peak of 1,021 per week, while government casualties rose from 367 to 928.⁵ In the political and military turmoil, many South Vietnamese openly sided with the communists, having little reason to believe their government could protect them. The only noteworthy success the early Duong Van Minh regime enjoyed in winning support from non-communist dissidents was with the Hoa Hao and Cao Dai religious sects which had been Diem's staunch enemies since their repression in 1955.⁶ After Diem's assassination, the more than three million people composing these groups took up arms against the Viet Cong, but few other Vietnamese made similar decisions. The January change in government produced more political turmoil, comparable Viet Cong gains, and further loss of popular support.

This rapidly deteriorating situation caused the new Johnson administration to take a more critical look at developments in South Vietnam and American policy toward them. Since the time when the United States first committed itself to supporting a noncommunist South Vietnam, an intense debate had raged over the nature of the Vietnamese conflict and the proper American role in it. At issue basically was not whether America should or should not participate but whether American involvement should be along political or military lines. The outcome of the debate determined the emphasis and prestige given to civic action and related non-military tactics.

In general terms, but with several notable exceptions, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, high-ranking military commanders, senior officials in the Defense Department, as well as U.S. military advisors in Vietnam supported American military involvement and a traditional military prosecution of the war effort. They had little use for unconventional or special warfare, or any of the activities, such as civic action, suggested by these labels. They had even less use for political maneuvering.⁷

These proponents of straightforward military action had been quickly overruled—though not silenced—by the proponents of political action who had successfully won President Kennedy's ear. The supporters of this latter position occupied key positions within the executive branch and the State Department, the Saigon Embassy, and the U.S. Operations Mission in Vietnam.⁸ Included in their ranks were such men as Walt Rostow, Henry Cabot Lodge, Robert Kennedy, Roger Hilsman, Michael Forestall, and Edward Lansdale. Lodge had replaced Nolting as American ambassador to Vietnam in August 1963.

Robert Kennedy had always held considerable sway with the President. Roger Hilsman served as director of the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research and later as Kennedy's Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs. Michael Forestall was an influential member of the National Security Council Staff for Far Eastern concerns. And Edward Lansdale—though technically within the Defense Department—fit in better ideologically with the National Security Council staff. This side stressed the unconventional: special forces, special air warfare, political arm-twisting, civic action, and psychological warfare. To these proponents of political action, the "winning of hearts and minds"—a frequently used phrase borrowed from the British civic action program—became the key to ultimate victory in Vietnam. Members of this group had actively lobbied for and overseen the implementation of the President's counterinsurgency program and sponsored the strategic hamlet pacification scheme as well as American involvement in it. While they acknowledged Diem's shortcomings as a leader, they initially backed him as the only person who could hold the country together politically and solve its internal problems. Members of this group believed that with enough pressure strategically applied, Diem could be convinced to undertake significant social and economic reforms to defeat the insurgents politically. This, they felt, could be accomplished by using Vietnamese resources and manpower without direct or large-scale American involvements.⁹

As long as the situation in Vietnam remained relatively stable, it seemed that the U.S. military services simply tolerated the emphasis on political warfare in order to please their Commander in Chief and his civilian advisors. In response to the administration's detailed and urgent instructions, each service had, in fact, directed some thought and resources to meeting the threat of insurgency. The special forces

were revitalized, and the air commandos and the Navy's SEALs (sea, air, and land teams) emerged as elite forces specialized in the "art" of counterinsurgency warfare. Behind the scene, however, Army traditionalists still dominated, and they actually fought the program, despite their rhetoric and statements to the contrary.¹⁰ Counterinsurgency doctrine was worked out through informal channels and largely by an Air Force officer—Edward Lansdale—not by Army personnel, although the Air Force in general had as little regard for counterinsurgency warfare as had the Army. Military men, like Lansdale, who sincerely believed in unconventional tactics, were effectively blacklisted and prevented from obtaining key government positions.¹¹

Generally within all the military services, civic action itself was likewise regarded as a "nice," but rather idealistic proposal which—while it might possibly be of some use in a relatively stable, but economically depressed country—really was of very little use in an active counter-guerrilla campaign. This is borne out by the fact that, while the Air Force had serious and quite well-developed civic action programs in various Latin American countries by the end of 1963, it had hardly given any effort to developing a formal civic action program in Vietnam. To be sure, civic activities had been undertaken there prior to 1964 in support of the strategic hamlet plan, but these had occurred under labels as varied as "airlift" and "hamlet defense." Some U.S. Air Force personnel had engaged in civic action on a direct, people-to-people basis, but most of these undertakings had been done voluntarily with little meaningful support from higher commanders. The Army had gained considerably more support for its civic action programs in Vietnam because of its more direct involvement with the peasantry on a daily basis, but there were many Army advisors as well who were not convinced of its utility. Especially while Gen. Earle G. Wheeler, an out-spoken critic of civic action, was Army Chief of Staff, little if any support was given in this regard.¹²

The political and military situation in Vietnam did not remain stable, however. Reports on the strategic hamlet program continued to be at least cautiously optimistic. But by the summer of 1963 many observers were becoming aware that Diem was more interested in using the program to establish control over the peasantry than in providing security and improved government services.¹³ This realization, coupled with growing political strife and disaffection, as well as Diem's repressive response to the Buddhist revolt caused many of the advocates of nonmilitary action, who had previously supported Diem, to question the wisdom of continuing to back a leader who had for all practical purposes lost the confidence of the Vietnamese people.¹⁴ Defenders of hard-line military action, on the other hand, continued to support the South Vietnamese president. Believing that military measures alone would solve most Vietnamese insurgency problems, regardless of who was in control in Saigon, they did not want to risk the instability and other repercussions which they believed would accompany a coup and thereby disrupt military progress.¹⁵ Continuing American support to Diem, then, forced into the open the issue of proper strategy.

But military strategists again lost the debate. By early fall intense skepticism about the military situation in South Vietnam began to be voiced with increasing frequency, as statistics were brought forth to substantiate fears of an unfavorable shift in the military balance.¹⁶ On September 2, in a CBS News interview by Walter Cronkite, President Kennedy indicated his continued belief that the crisis in Vietnam was primarily a contest for the allegiance of the people, not a real military war, and that the Diem regime was losing it:

I don't think that unless a greater effort is made by the Government to win popular support that the war can be won out there. In the final analysis, it is their war. They are the ones who have to win it or lose it. We can help them, we can give them equipment, we can send our men out there as advisers, but they have to win it—the people of Viet-Nam—against the Communists. We are prepared to continue to assist them, but I don't think that the war can be won unless the people support the effort, and, in my opinion, in the last two months the Government has gotten out of touch with the people.¹⁷

Nonetheless, in October McNamara and Taylor, then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, returned from an inspection tour of South Vietnam to report to Kennedy that the military campaign had "made great progress and continues to progress," and that the U.S. military task could be completed as early as the end of 1965 by adherence to the counterinsurgency program. The report did warn, however, of the deeply serious political tensions in South Vietnam and that "further repressive actions by Diem and Thu could change the present favorable military trends."¹⁸ Pessimistic reports on Diem's handling of the strategic hamlets followed.

There were few signs that Diem planned to mend his ways as a result of U.S. pressure. On the first of November—whatever the extent of American complicity—the long anticipated coup occurred, and politically inexperienced generals assumed control of the government. In the streets of Saigon the Vietnamese demonstrated for joy at news of Diem's execution. An unpopular and repressive rule had come to an end. There was room only for celebration. Within weeks a new American president took over the direction of American involvement in the war. All indications were he intended to continue in the course set by his predecessor.¹⁹ President Johnson hoped that with Diem gone, popular loyalty to Saigon would increase, and America could continue with its planned military withdrawal by the end of 1965. From all appearances, proponents of political action had won the strategy debate. Unfortunately they were unable to savor the victory for long, for the American generals' predictions of the ill-consequences of a military coup proved all too accurate in the long run.

One month after the overthrow of the Ngo Dinh Diem regime, however, political and psychological factors continued to be upheld as the dominant ones in the issue of victory or defeat for a free government in South Vietnam.²⁰ And Johnson continued to stress that the hamlet program was one of the most important methods of giving the peasantry a vested interest in the success of the new Saigon regime and hence was vital to the future of the war effort.²¹ The new administration did concede, nonetheless, that the program was seriously overextended and that retrenchment along more realistic lines was in order. The same conclusion was reached by Gen. Harkins as well as the provisional government in Saigon. As a result a temporary halt in the construction of new hamlets was called, and by the end of November hundreds of strategic hamlets had been abandoned and their populations resettled in other villages more easily defended or farther from Viet Cong strongholds. In a directive to all province chiefs, the ruling military council ordered officials to stop forcing peasants to move into hamlets against their will and to stop insisting that they contribute to them financially. Officials were instructed to request "labor contributions" only for projects that would directly benefit the hamlet residents. Premier Minh also declared

his support for renewed efforts to provide government security and economic and welfare services promised but often not delivered by the former regime. Along with these proposed reforms, local political administration was to be improved as well through the appointment of new, more honest, and more dedicated provincial and other local chiefs. All these changes had been long advocated by many American advisors, but while Diem was in power he largely ignored the advice. It was hoped that an implementation of the changes would result in a consolidation of reasonably effective hamlets, deprive the Viet Cong of easy military targets, release thousands of soldiers for more mobile duty, and increase the popularity of the new government.²²

Even before the second coup occurred in January, however, evidence began to accumulate that the program was not working according to plan. A number of factors, many of them with roots in the Diem period, accounted for this turn of events in spite of mounting U.S. military and economic assistance. Improved U.S. intelligence following Diem's overthrow revealed that both the political and military deterioration under Diem had been far worse than anyone had imagined. New data showed that the situation had actually begun to disintegrate as early as the summer of 1963 and that there were as many hardcore Viet Cong at the close of 1963 as there had been two years earlier.²³ This was particularly disheartening because it occurred despite two years of massive amounts of American aid. The United States had been kept unaware of the situation by misleading or completely falsified reports.²⁴ According to McNamara, "We did not know how deep the root was," and so were prevented from responding in the most beneficial manner and early enough to have a remedial impact.²⁵ Secondly, the critical economic situation in South Vietnam which had earlier hampered the effectiveness of social programs for the hamlets actually grew more critical after the takeover by military rulers having little regard for economic expertise. And finally, the hoped for improvement in the country's political climate did not materialize.²⁶ The new military leaders were completely inexperienced in political administration. In addition, they had little practical knowledge or clear understanding of the purpose or proper conduct of the strategic hamlet program. As a result they could give little guidance to the new and inexperienced province chiefs who were expected to make the program work. Moreover, as the generals jockeyed for political power in Saigon, there were few left to direct the war effort against the stepped-up Viet Cong activity in the countryside.²⁷

A report by a provincial representative of the U.S. Operations Mission as early as December 6 detailed the results of the breakdown in authority. It described the almost total collapse of pacification in Long An Province, adjacent to Saigon, in which the Viet Cong were overrunning hamlets and military outposts on a daily basis with little resistance. Failure of the pacification program was ascribed to either the inability or the unwillingness of the Minh regime to provide adequate defense for hamlets under Viet Cong attack.²⁸ A follow-up, fact-finding visit by Secretary McNamara that same month confirmed the steady deterioration in the provinces around the capital and in the Mekong delta. Significantly, in his report to President Johnson McNamara recommended the creation and implementation of a new and more realistic pacification plan to correct the weaknesses of the moribund Diem-Nhu program.²⁹ The same consensus was reached by top U.S. military and diplomatic officials in daily contact with the Vietnamese situation.³⁰

By the end of January 1964 the military junta, with the help of the U.S. Military Assistance Command in Saigon, had formulated a new pacification proposal

called the "Dien Hong" plan. In many ways it was simply a revision of earlier pacification plans, incorporating those aspects which had been successful and either eliminating or changing those which had caused serious difficulties. Like the strategic hamlet program, it employed the Malaya-tested "spreading oil spot" concept. Government forces would clear an area, develop it, provide social programs, insure adequate security, and—after an honest local government had been set up to administer the program—move on to repeat the procedure in another area. Many similar detachments would work simultaneously in other parts of the country, proceeding from safe areas to unsafe areas and finally merging together giving the government an expanded area of control.³¹ At Ambassador Lodge's insistence, a proposal was included for a broader, better-executed civic action program to eliminate one of the obvious failures of the strategic hamlet scheme. Lodge also urged American support for well-trained "political" teams to work in conjunction with the pacification cadres. These teams would be dispatched to vulnerable provinces or areas already held by the communists to advertise the Saigon government's civic efforts and objectives in such areas as police protection, education, land reform, and health and welfare programs. Lodge suggested that the program be tested in Long An Province where Viet Cong control was virtually complete.³²

The new pacification program was scheduled to begin on February 2, but the January 30 coup prevented immediate implementation. Nguyen Khanh, commander of the Vietnamese Army's I Corps, now became head of state, charging that the three month old Minh regime had not brought about sufficient military, political, social, and economic progress, and that Minh had participated in a plot to neutralize South Vietnam.³³ By the end of February the Khanh regime had developed its own replacement plan which, nonetheless, retained most of the features of the Dien @n proposal. The new program was designed to concentrate on substance and not on form. Care rather than haste was to be the guiding principle. For instance, there would be no forced relocation as under the strategic hamlet program by which families had been moved against their will. Likewise, completion of defensive works would no longer be measured by arbitrary standards such as the number of meters of barbed wire fence installed. Nor would pacification be presumed complete simply because such defensive structures had been erected.³⁴

The Khanh program was similar to the Dien Hong plan in other respects as well. For example, it promised to continue to reduce excessive resettlement, avoid unnecessary planting of mines and booby traps, and discourage the press-ganging of people into projects that were normally the governments responsibility, such as road-building and ditch-digging. There would also be an expanded civic action program, concentrating on such public works as roads, hospitals, and schools, as well as a revitalized "open arms" program to win converts from among the Viet Cong. In addition, the emphasis on an integrated civil-military approach would be retained. The guerrilla-type forces which were to provide the first line of protection to hamlets being pacified would be taken from the civil guard and the self-defense corps, not from the regular Vietnamese military forces. These paramilitary personnel were usually recruited from the local area and could thus identify themselves closely with the people they were protecting. And finally, following a realistic reevaluation of the political situation which revealed that only a fraction of the former strategic hamlets remained under government control, Khanh agreed that the new program would need to start, if not from scratch, at least from a greatly reduced base.³⁵ A few minor

modifications changed the name of the national effort to the "Chien Thang" or "victory" plan, and strategic hamlets themselves were figuratively renamed "new life" hamlets.³⁶

Although the pacification proposal was scheduled for implementation in March, by mid-February the Khanh government was already undertaking "clear and hold" operations and showing other signs of vigorous and promising leadership.³⁷ On February 17, McNamara announced to the U.S. Congress that Khanh's political base appeared also to be increasing and that the prospects for increased stability looked good. The Secretary followed these observations with a reaffirmation of plans for American withdrawal in two years. The State Department was equally impressed with the new government and looked forward to a prompt conclusion of the war.³⁸ Many other Americans hoped that in Khanh the South Vietnamese at last had a leader capable of using the country as Magsaysay had done in the Philippines.³⁹ Gen Harkins, who knew Khanh personally, thought he was one of the strongest military men in South Vietnam. "If anyone can give strong direction to the effort here," Harkins said, "I think Khanh can." Harkins also believed that Khanh's new life hamlet plan was sound and would provide an excellent "chance of getting the counterinsurgency effort under control."⁴⁰

Eager to encourage the favorable trend in South Vietnam, President Johnson ordered that all requests from Ambassador Lodge for American aid be filled promptly. Meanwhile Gen. Taylor suggested to the Joint Chiefs that the counterinsurgency program be revitalized and plans be made to guarantee continued governmental stability. The Chiefs responded with recommendations for more American advisors, better intelligence data collection, increased operations in communist-held border areas, and more effective crop destruction programs. In addition, they endorsed the new life hamlet plan as well as other civic programs—such as financial relief for heavily taxed areas—designed to win back popular support.⁴¹

U.S. Air Force personnel in Vietnam were equally hopeful that the new government and its pacification program would be able to strengthen the South Vietnamese position in the countryside. They predicted that as the program progressed from one area to another, the Viet Cong would be pushed into smaller and smaller areas, becoming a more observable target for tactical air strikes and allowing free strike zones to be created. The Air Force drew up plans for such a contingency. One Second Air Division liaison officer even suggested that tactical U.S. aircraft from Thailand, the Philippines, and Okinawa be placed on call for use against such possible targets when they developed. A maximum amount of air power could thereby be brought against them.⁴²

Most of the planning for Air Force participation in the new pacification program, however, was under-taken by Pacific Air Forces. The plan which the Air Force developed focused on the obvious military value of destroying Viet Cong strongholds and increasing enemy casualties, but it also contained a heavy emphasis on aerial resupply and aerial defense of friendly population groups. The Vietnamese hamlet defense forces could discover impending enemy attacks and offer brief resistance, but, as with the strategic hamlet plan, they needed outside reinforcement to withstand determined enemy bombardment. In early 1964 the Vietnamese armed forces still lacked the organization and equipment to provide the kind and degree of support the new life hamlets needed. Much of the program's success would, consequently, depend on the U.S. Air Force response.⁴³

As a result, the proposal prepared by Pacific Air Forces envisioned a much wider and better-coordinated role for the Air Force than under Diem's pacification plan. In addition to more combat strikes to help clear areas of Viet Cong initially, the plan called for placing more aircraft on continuous alert to provide faster reaction to calls for reinforcement. It also requested more U.S. aircraft and personnel for border patrol and reconnaissance to discover enemy infiltration, movement, build-up, and evidence of impending attacks. Air Force Secretary Zuckert proposed the continued use of U.S. aircraft for transporting medical supplies, food, and equipment and for making aerial loudspeaker broadcasts to both the South Vietnamese and the Viet Cong. It was hoped that this expanded role for air power would have an important psychological impact on the Viet Cong by weakening their morale and increasing defections. It was believed also that the program would draw increased support from previously neutral South Vietnamese, making them more willing to cooperate with the government and less likely to fall under the sway of communist propaganda.⁴⁴

Before many months had passed, however, it became apparent that the Khanh government and the new life hamlet plan had serious weaknesses. Initially the program got off to a floundering start because of administrative inexperience at both the national and provincial levels. The rapid turnover and replacement of personnel with each new change of government was largely to blame for this. Between November 1 and the end of February, for example, thirty-five of the forty-one provincial chiefs had been replaced at least once. Nine provinces had received three different chiefs in three months, and one had four. Lesser positions experienced a similar turnover rate. Almost all major military commands changed hands twice. The disruptions and turmoil which ensued at these lower levels of government proved especially debilitating since it was there that pacification would succeed or fail.⁴⁵

Another factor retarding implementation of the pacification plan was the country's eroding economic situation. Shortages of resources and lack of organization severely limited the allocations available to get the program moving. Funds for compensation of resettlement damages and for construction of public utilities later proved to be in critically short supply as well.⁴⁶

The major problem the program faced, however, was the government's failure to provide central direction and firm national leadership for the effort. Khanh had initially established a national pacification council to oversee such matters. But since he himself headed up the council, it did not represent a real delegation of authority. As more urgent matters pressed on the Prime Minister's time, little effort was put forth to make the council work. This weakness was compounded by the equally pressing need for detailed organizational and operational plans at the local and provincial levels. The absence of coordination between civilian and military agencies and the lack of guidance from the national level created a vacuum which each separate branch of the Vietnamese armed forces tried to fill by independently deciding its own role in the overall pacification plan. The result was duplication of effort in some cases, failure to provide adequate military representation in others, and general misuse and mismanagement of resources. More problems surfaced at the provincial level where conflicts often developed over the necessity for dividing resources between military operations and support for pacification. During the first few months after the plan was put into operation, for example, there were several instances in which regular forces were assigned to static security missions, while paramilitary troops originally assigned to pacification were called to undertake combat operations outside

their native provinces.⁴⁷ The failure to set firm national policies also meant that the attention and planning given to formal civic action programs and other techniques designed to gain the confidence of the people were inadequate. Consequently, military units often did not receive the training they needed to carry out such programs effectively.⁴⁸

Shortly after he had assumed power, Gen. Khanh also began to have serious political problems himself. Initially he had been able to gain the backing of various political and military factions, including the strong support of Vietnamese Air Force commander Nguyen Cao Ky. But his flimsy accusations against Minh and his brash usurpation of power earned him a bad reputation in Vietnam, despite U.S. efforts to portray him as America's choice.⁴⁹ As time passed the government lost more and more respectability, Khanh failed to consolidate his supporters, and the regime became less and less viable.⁵⁰

In March, President Johnson sent Secretary McNamara and Gen. Taylor to Saigon for a fresh appraisal of the Vietnamese political situation and of progress on the pacification program. In his report, McNamara underscored the regime's failure to win rural support. He pointed out that large groups of the population were showing signs of apathy and indifference, paramilitary desertion rates were high and increasing, military morale was poor and falling, recruiting for the armed forces was becoming increasingly more difficult, and political control over the rural hamlets had all but disappeared. "The faith of the peasants has been shaken," McNamara concluded. "In many areas power vacuums have developed causing confusion among the people, and a rising rate of rural disorders."⁵¹ Those power vacuums also served as invitations for the Viet Cong to move in and establish control.⁵²

Although Khanh pledged to redouble his efforts to make pacification work, in May when McNamara and Taylor returned to Vietnam, both the political and military picture had worsened considerably. Khanh openly admitted that he was increasingly unable to cope with his political problems and that he controlled the loyalties of only about 57 percent of the Vietnamese people. The rest were not necessarily under Viet Cong control, but they were alienated from the Saigon regime.⁵³ An official U.S. report released the month before was even more pessimistic. It stated that only 34 percent of Vietnam's villages were government controlled, 24 percent were neutral, and 42 percent were outright Viet Cong.⁵⁴ From all appearances, the communists had once again gained the initiative in the struggle for popular loyalty.⁵⁵ By mid-summer, amid rumors of coups and actual coup attempts, student and Buddhist riots and demonstrations again erupted in the streets of South Vietnamese cities. As a result Khanh was forced to turn most of his attention to the problems of staying in power just at the time when strong leadership was needed most. American pressure on the general to resolve his political problems and get on with the war fell on deaf ears.

As pessimistic reports poured into Washington from all sides, the Joint Chiefs of Staff moved forward with their military proposals for increasing American participation and for escalating the war by carrying it into North Vietnam. Although not completely convinced by their arguments, President Johnson drifted in favor of their position.⁵⁶ It was becoming increasingly more difficult to control the political chaos in Saigon—much less direct political events into positive channels and use them as the chief means of defeating the Viet Cong.⁵⁷ Moreover, it was thought that an increase in military pressure might actually help to stabilize the government.

Many of the political war strategists who had originally supported the Diem

coup and the Kennedy counterinsurgency program now lost favor with the Johnson administration. Some, like Roger Hilsman, resigned their positions; others were passed over when important decisions had to be made. Gradually the Defense Department replaced the civilians in the State Department as the chief decision-makers on the direction of American activities in Vietnam.⁵⁸ Emphasis on pacification and the need for securing popular approval for the regime in Saigon began to lag and finally, toward the end of the year, reached a nadir. The Gulf of Tonkin incident in August and the decision to retaliate by bombing key installations in the North seemed to confirm the President's shift of emphasis from political to military warfare.

The argument for using nonmilitary solutions to solve the Vietnamese problem, however, remained viable and continued to draw supporters. In August 1964, President Johnson reaffirmed his support for the military civic action programs which had been initiated while Kennedy was still president. Likewise, a congressional subcommittee investigating Military Assistance Program and Agency for International Development costs found civic action worthy of continued support. Later that year the Agency for International Development, working with the Defense Department, compiled a report on significant civic action programs undertaken worldwide. The report highlighted Air Force contributions, particularly in the areas of preventive medicine and civic action mobile training teams.⁵⁹ That year also the Foreign Service Institute of the Department of State conducted a foreign policy seminar on the role of military civic action in the American foreign aid program. The resulting report concluded that the program was "meeting with success" and recommended that it be accelerated on an expanded scale. The report also proposed manning the program with a selected corps of personnel whose primary mission was civic action. These troops would undergo extensive area, language, and special warfare training and serve tours for extended periods of four or five years in order to get maximum effectiveness.⁶⁰

The need for improved training in civic action, however, had already been recognized by the military services and steps were taken to satisfy the deficiency. By 1964 programs of instruction for basic training and many service school courses included such topics as proper attitudes toward civilian populations, community relations, and civic action.⁶¹ In 1962 the Air Command and Staff College at the Air University conducted a one-time counterinsurgency course for 250 officers which was filmed for distribution to other Air Force units. The need for a regular course led the following year to the establishment of a two-week course for officers assigned to attach positions, military assistance advisory groups, and the Second Air Division in South Vietnam. It was offered on a permanent basis by the Air University through 1966. Civic action received considerable attention in both these courses.⁶² Early 1963 the Air Force cold war division prepared a pamphlet entitled "Air Force Civic Actions." The pamphlet served as a very helpful reference tool for Air Force commanders and their units in the field.⁶³ It described the problems of providing internal security for developing nations, outlined the roles of government agencies in civic action, delineated the specific Air Force mission, and provided guidance for development of civic action programs using both foreign and U.S. Air Force resources.⁶⁴ Later that year at the request of the USAF Directorate of Plans, the Special Air Warfare Center and the Air Pictorial and Charting Service produced three motion pictures on special air warfare. Two of the films accentuated the civic action role that local air units could play in developing countries.⁶⁵

In Vietnam, this emphasis on civic action training began to pay dividends in

1964 and 1965. Since 1962 the Second Air Division had been moving considerable amounts of cargo and passengers to the major cities and towns of South Vietnam, contributing to the country's general stability. During the last half of 1964, however, the Air Force undertook a life-saving role. While the government was immobilized by successive coups and governmental corruption, the Viet Cong virtually destroyed the national railway network and severely limited traffic on many major roads. Vast populated regions were instantly isolated. Moreover, encroaching communist forces were able to drive many South Vietnamese forces out of the hinterland areas of the north and the flat delta lands of the south. Leaving small islands of government strength behind. To keep these isolated areas and outposts viable and within the government net, the 315th Air Commando Group organized a continuous airlift using their C-123 aircraft. Organized into four squadrons (two at Tan Son Nhut and one each at Da Nang and Nha Trang), and flying in and out of some ninety-five airfields throughout South Vietnam, the C-123's became a literal lifeline to many of these places.⁶⁶ Aircrews and aircraft worked well beyond their scheduled limits carrying food, ammunition, weapons, fuel, passengers, vehicles and practically everything else needed to sustain fighting forces and keep civilians alive. And often, herded aboard with the jeeps, howitzers, ordnance, road scrapers, and peasant families with their little bags of possessions, were ducks, chickens, pigs, and even cows.⁶⁷ The political value of this regular transport service became apparent as thousands who had never ridden anything but ox-drawn carts came to depend on this unique airline not only for their personal mobility but as the only means available for moving their produce to market.⁶⁸

As the political and military crisis in South Vietnam deepened, the "Vietnam Airlift" took on more and more importance.⁶⁹ In June 1965 the four C-123 squadrons airlifted 9,214 tons of cargo—more than three times the amount handled during the same month in 1963.⁷⁰ One air liaison officer perceptively noted that "the task once was that of selling air support; now the emphasis is on getting the goods delivered."⁷¹ Because of the ever increasing airlift demands, the larger-capacity C-130 Hercules craft were added to the airlift program in 1965, substantially augmenting the capability of the 315th Air Commando Group. The C-123 aircraft were also supplemented by the cargo-carrying C-47s of the Vietnamese Air Force, the smaller, more-easily maneuvered C-7 Caribous which were still under Army control, six CV-2B Caribous of the Royal Australian Air Force, and two Bristol aircraft belonging to the Royal New Zealand Air Force.⁷²

While these aircraft were used extensively for combat troop and combat cargo transport, much of their capacity was applied directly to the task of nation-building. In the northern I and II Corps areas of South Vietnam (see map), C-123s flew into remote mountainous regions, often providing special forces troops and Vietnamese civilians their only contact with the national government. One air liaison officer with the II Corps described the vital role played by aerial resupply:

The ground situation in II Corps deteriorated drastically in the last twelve months. In September 1964, one could travel by convoy throughout the Corps. Ambushes were few and generally for harassment purposes only. At present [mid 1965] every major city is isolated by road cuts from its neighbor and to the sea. Major road clear and repair operations by from four to six battalions were required to

open a specific stretch of highway and then only for a few days as the troops were required elsewhere and the VC gained control of the area again. The last train to reach Qui Nhon from Saigon arrived in late October 1964. The trip took 26 days because of blown bridges, road cuts, and ambushes.⁷³

As transport aircraft and crews responded to such demands for aerial resupply and support, they demonstrated to thousands of Vietnamese, whatever their political persuasion or lack of it, the ability and resolve of the Saigon government and its allies to keep communication lines open and to sustain army units in the field. Without this airlift effort, national unity would have become a meaningless ten-n, and much of this vast area would have slipped under Viet Cong control through the simple process of abdication.⁷⁴ Colonel Benjamin Preston, U.S. Air Force commander at Da Nang in 1964, described the vital civic action work performed by these aircraft:

I came to realize how much these little people looked forward to the stops by our C-123 aircraft. Our airlift system has revolutionized the way of life of many of these people; particularly the outpost people who depended upon us for resupply. The daily shuttle run between Da Nang and Tan Son Nhut affectionately called TWA (Teeny Weeny Airlines) or the "Shotgun Stage" has become famous to Vietnamese and U.S. alike as the only way most of them can travel north or south. Sometimes it breaks down en route at Nha Trang, Qui Nhon, Quang Ngai, or Hue Fue Bai, and it becomes a community project to load, unload, handle block and tackle, etc, and try to get it going again. I guess it comes closer to the old Western Overland Stage than anything else I can think of. I think the combat cargo airlift system and "Shotgun Stage...that we operated out of Da Nang comprised one of the most effective people-to-people programs we could possibly devise, both in frequency of contact with the people, and in the rendering of a service which they came to understand and appreciate. I watched our crews at work, and the way they handled themselves in helping people, reassuring children and ancient old peasant couples, laughing and joking, sweating and cursing, but acknowledging the human dignity of the individual all the while, made me realize that they were some of Mr. Lodge's best possible ambassadorial representatives.... When crew and passengers engage in the hue and cry that is raised in trying to catch some little pigs who broke out of their baskets as they were being loaded on an airplane, they can't help but become friends and they all remember the incident with amusement and friendly thoughts.⁷⁵

In addition to working long hours, C-123 crews encountered hazardous conditions even though engaged in essentially civic work. The C-123s had to fly into many areas which completely lacked air traffic control facilities. Only twelve of the 176 South Vietnamese airfields had control towers, for example.⁷⁶ No radar during the monsoon season when low clouds usually mask the western highlands, meant that most flying had to be done under the clouds with planes sometimes only 200 feet above the treetops. When landing in such places, the pilots themselves would have to

judge the weather and runway conditions. At many remote outposts it was impossible to know what the ground situation was. Sometimes the C-23s would have to circle an area for as much as an hour before determining the status, but by that time the Viet Cong would be aware that a delivery was being made.⁷⁷ Often the airfields were either dirt or tiny, 2,000-foot pierced steel planking strips nestled in among rugged mountain ranges, dense jungles, or on wet delta lands. Tropical thunderstorms and flooded runways combined to create perilous conditions. Landing the large C-123s or taking off under such conditions was a difficult task even for experienced air delivery crews and required a high degree of skill, precision, and judgment. Yet many of the men who flew the transports had been trained to fly strategic aircraft like the B-47 and B-52 bombers. For these pilots, transferring to the C-123s and operating them in the Vietnamese jungle required considerable adaptability and courage as well.⁷⁸

The hazards of the supply mission were further heightened by ground combat conditions. Pilots often had to make deliveries to fields that were being subjected to ground fire during approaches, takeoffs, and low-level drops. Because of the nature of the delivery operation and the low altitudes required, damage from small arms fire was an ever-present danger. Since the transports were not capable of returning the fire, and as the number of aerial deliveries increased, the Viet Cong became more dauntless in their assaults. By the middle of 1964, every single C-123 of the squadron based at Da Nang had been hit by enemy bullets. Although the crew escaped injury, one plane was hit thirty-two times. Under such conditions, C-123 pilots became adept at dodging enemy gunfire and unloading their cargo quickly or airdropping it over areas where the Viet Cong had .50 caliber anti-aircraft weapons waiting.⁷⁹ But even then more C-123s were hit by ground fire than any other type of fixed wing aircraft—once every 237th sortie during the last six months of 1964. Of the hits experienced during that period, forty were incurred during spraying operations, fifteen while landing, thirteen while dropping cargo, six during takeoff, one during a flare operation, and one while on the ground awaiting take-off. All of these mishaps involved different aircraft.⁸⁰

In addition to airlifting cargo and passengers to areas with prepared airstrips, the C-123 transports were responsible for carrying supplies into some sixty-six drop zones scattered throughout South Vietnam.⁸¹ Most of these sites lacked all the basic air traffic control facilities. Often they were identified only by a marker balloon which was floated above the jungle canopy. Drops to these areas had to be small and frequent to permit the recipients to transport the goods by backpack. To allow the supplies to be delivered as unobtrusively as possible, drop sites were usually chosen to fall within frequently used or ostensibly cross-country flight paths.⁸²

The C-123 transports, reconfigured and loaded with illuminating flares, also flew nightly patrols and maintained a nightly airborne alert over the southern delta region, continuing a function which had proved successful while the strategic hamlet program was in operation. The Viet Cong, who had taken advantage of darkness to harass and overrun the islands of government strength denied them by daylight almost invariably broke off the attack when C-123s or C-47s approached with their brilliant flares. Although the flares themselves were harmless, they usually meant a counter-attack was imminent. Some outposts in areas under repeated attacks by the enemy managed to maintain themselves only because of this nightly protection. During 1964 and 1965 the number of flares dropped over areas under attack rose at a nearly constant rate, going as high as 8,000 in a single month. At least once a night

and sometimes up to ten times a night, an outpost or hamlet would call for help, and the planes would be overhead within minutes dropping up to 115 flares each to illuminate the area under attack and guide fighters to their targets. The presence of these flare-dropping planes tremendously boosted South Vietnamese morale and gave evidence of governmental presence and concern in places where the Viet Cong dominated in almost all other respects.⁸³

Transport aircraft also contributed to emergency and disaster relief by flying out wounded and dropping supplies. Thus, when devastating floods struck north and central Vietnam in November 1964, drowning hundreds of people and leaving more than one million homeless, the C-123 force was brought into action at the request of the Vietnamese government. An emergency relief coordination center was established at Quang Ngai, where the damage was most extensive, and extra C-124s, C-130s, and several Australian Caribous were diverted into the region to aid in the airlift effort. Flying around the clock, these aircraft lifted tons of food, medical supplies, and other critically needed items daily. Air crews also hauled gasoline for helicopters, boats for rescue workers, clothes for destitute survivors, and almost everything else that was asked for. By the end of December when the major part of the crisis had ended, the Second Air Division had flown 382 sorties into the devastated area, hauled nearly three million pounds of flood relief cargo, and, evacuated over 1500 homeless victims to more secure areas. Because roads remained blocked, emergency air deliveries of food and supplies to locations as far north as Da Nang and as far south as Phan Thiet continued through much of the winter.⁸⁴

In support of these airlift rescue efforts, the Second Air Division and the civilian personnel office at Tan Son Nhut, where many of the C-123s were located, set up a special fund for flood relief. Almost 60,000 piasters (approximately \$1,000) were collected from the U.S. Air Force military personnel and Vietnamese civilians employed at the air base. This contribution was turned over to the Military Assistance Command and the deputy commander of the Vietnamese Air Force for distribution to flood victims.⁸⁵

In addition to official programs, the humanitarian and enterprising instincts of individual airlifters produced various private ventures. In one undertaking aircrews aboard Air Force CH-3C helicopters distributed 80,000 pounds of confiscated Viet Cong rice to peasants around Tuy Hoa.⁸⁶ At another time they provided protective air cover for rice harvesters and then picked up the freshly harvested rice and airlifted it to safe areas.⁸⁷ C-123 crews of the 311th Troop Carrier Squadron collected Montagnard handicraft at forward locations for sale in Da Nang. The money was then used to purchase supplies needed by the tribesmen.⁸⁸ Farmgate personnel conducted clothing drives at Eglin Air Force Base for free-fall delivery over isolated Vietnamese villages. And U.S. pilots risked their lives in resupplying nine outposts along the Laos frontier which had been isolated by communist guerrillas during the monsoon seasons. The occupants of two posts were near starvation and had resorted to eating field mice and bamboo shoots when a C-47 flew through the mountain passes under cloud cover to drop several wicker baskets of live pigs and chickens, rice, and fresh fruit.⁸⁹

Other U.S. Air Force aircraft were utilized in additional civic capacities to help stabilize the country, extend administrative control to lower levels, and inspire the people to positive loyalty to the government. During the latter part of 1964, for example, the Air Force permanently assigned one of its small O-1F liaison aircraft to Kien Phong Province in the Vietnamese southern delta region. Although the aircraft

was operated by a U.S. Air Force forward air controller, the province chief was given virtually complete control of its use. The chief was the one who usually knew most about enemy movements and operations in his province and could approve or disapprove all air strikes; an aircraft at his disposal would greatly facilitate intelligence collection and help in spotting or confirming the presence of enemy forces.

This proved to be the case in Kien Phong. The area of the province along the Cambodian border was a zone of intense communist activity. For several years the Viet Cong had run the local government and collected taxes from district residents. They also controlled the important Cai River-Phouc Xuyen Canal waterway, a major supply route from Cambodia into South Vietnam. At the end of September 1964 the province chief decided to take action. He notified the local residents by psychological warfare leaflets that they were to evacuate the area in preparation for military operations against the Viet Cong. By the end of November more than 7,000 people had moved, and South Vietnamese agents reported that all friendly personnel had left the region. On December 7 the first interdiction strike ever undertaken in Kien Phong Province began, and the O-1F pilot was instrumental in gaining support from aircraft of the airborne alert force. The tactical operations center, the agency responsible for allocating fighter support, had in the past been reluctant to give such backing for similar operations in other areas. The campaign was extremely successful and had an immense psychological impact on area residents, convincing them that the province chief had both the prestige and the resources to stand up to the Viet Cong. According to the air liaison officer, this successful operation promised to "make future operations easier because the people now believe the province chief".⁹⁰

Retention of the O-1F in the province after the military operation was over gave the province chief a much needed tool with which to reassert his authority. The chief was extremely pleased with the plane and enthusiastic about having it deployed permanently to his province. He provided adequate security forces for it and even built a special concrete block revetment for added protection. Although the chief came to regard the aircraft as his personal property, somewhat delaying similar deployments to other provinces, additional O-1Fs were eventually made available to other province chiefs as well. By the end of 1965 the number of "Bird Dogs" in use had quadrupled.⁹¹ Because the O-1 was a versatile plane and could land almost anywhere, it put the chiefs in closer proximity to the people under their jurisdiction. The aircraft became especially valuable in districts which were otherwise unapproachable by land or water. And daily fights over areas under tight Viet Cong control served as tangible reminders that the inhabitants of those areas were not forgotten.

While the special efforts in transportation, communication, and rescue relief carried out by the C-123s and the O-1Fs provided the most vivid examples of how the Air Force contributed to a more responsive and unified South Vietnam, Air Force civic action encompassed a wide range of other activities as well. Many of these were undertaken following the introduction of large numbers of Air Force units into the country aid the beginning of the campaign to bomb North Vietnam. In June 1964, as part of President Johnson's reshuffling of governmental personnel, Gen. William C. Westmoreland replaced Gen. Harkins as head of U.S. forces in Vietnam. Westmoreland feared the negative impact which a massive buildup of American military personnel might have on the civilian population. And there was always the danger that large numbers of foreigners would be misconstrued as an American follow-up to French colonial control. In the first years of U.S. presence in Vietnam,

newcomers had received considerable orientation on the psychological, political, and socioeconomic aspects of the struggle, and many Air Force officers had attended special language and counterinsurgency courses. With the heightening of the military phase of the war in early 1965 and the massive influx of American troops, however, the emphasis on this orientation decreased significantly, and more and more officers and airmen were going into the country without any real preparation for the non-military aspects of the Vietnamese situation. This could, of course, create problems in relations with the Vietnamese people.⁹²

Realizing that military civic action would serve as an effective means to help allay any apprehensiveness on the part of the South Vietnamese, Westmoreland directed all American units in the country to conduct a concentrated program close to where they were stationed and in areas of active combat as well. Some of the civic activities carried out during this period, then, were in response to pressure from the Military Assistance Command. But since the Air Force still lacked an organized and centrally directed national civic action program, most Air Force projects were simply acts of goodwill performed by airmen who saw a need and acted in a spontaneous way to bring about its fulfillment.⁹³

A number of civic action programs, for example, were started among the Montagnard people in South Vietnam. Airmen painted classrooms, provided new blackboards, books, and maps for schools, planted vegetable gardens, built two small dams, helped stock a refugee center, and constructed several playground facilities.⁹⁴ In the mountain village of Pleiku, one Air Force sergeant from the 3rd Detachment of the 1964th Communications Group, armed with only a medical kit and some free time, gained local fame among the villagers for the first aid work he did among them. As stories were circulated about his humanitarian activities, his clientele increased. By the end of his tour, he had treated well over one thousand people of all ages and made significant progress in getting the Montagnards to employ basic hygienic principles in their daily lives. All this was accomplished with only American Red Cross training.⁹⁵

Professional U.S. Air Force medical personnel likewise gave freely of their off-duty time to help the Vietnamese people. They treated the sick, taught first aid classes, and provided medical services for orphanages and outlying rural communities where these services were inadequate. On many occasions Air Force veterinarians would even go into villages on disease prevention programs, assisting in water purification and improvement of sanitary standards. The medical work performed by these American military personnel was particularly important to the Vietnamese. Throughout most of this period there was only one civilian physician for every 20,000 people, compared with a ratio of one to every 700 people in the United States at the time. Consequently, officers and airmen with even a little medical training had no trouble occupying off-duty time. At twenty locations in the Bien Hoa area alone, more than 9000 patients were treated by Air Force physicians during a three-month period in 1965. And during this same while, Air Force dentists treated more than 300 Vietnamese with dental problems.⁹⁶

The typical American propensity toward friendliness and openhanded generosity was evident in other areas as well. Many Air Force members voluntarily taught English classes, primarily at the Vietnamese-American Association in Saigon, which had over 7000 students in 1965 who were eager to learn the English language.⁹⁷ These classes as well as the personal contacts which they engendered did much to

bridge the cultural gap between the two peoples. Other members of the Second Air Division donated money for causes ranging from an annual "Toys for Tot" program run by Air Force personnel, to clothes and food drives to aid orphans and war widows. In 1964 officers and men of the 619th Tactical Control Squadron, along with Vietnamese airmen, stationed at Tan Son Nhut, raised about \$65 to help fifty-one Vietnamese children enjoy Children's Day—the Vietnamese youngsters' day for toys and candy which came each year during the mid-autumn festival. The money was turned over to a U.S. Air Force captain and a Vietnamese lieutenant who went on a shopping spree for the children. They then joined with the rest of the unit and their Vietnamese counterparts in giving out the gifts.⁹⁸ At another time the chaplains of the 23rd Air Base Group at Da Nang Air Base spearheaded a basewide drive for books, magazines, and cash donations in response to a request for educational material from the commander of the 41st Wing of the Vietnamese Air Force. All donations were used to establish a library to provide Da Nang-based Vietnamese military personnel with better educational facilities.⁹⁹

The officers and enlisted men of the 23rd Air Base Group were also involved in a large-scale civic action program begun in 1962 known as "Operation Lifeline." This well-publicized, but unofficial operation involved a series of civic projects aimed at bettering the living conditions of the people and supporting seven orphanages in and around Da Nang. By 1965 the men had, among other things, installed a water system at one orphanage, taught English to Vietnamese children in their regularly scheduled classes, provided medical supplies to a local, leprosarium, and installed screening and electrical wiring in a nursery. They also solicited tons of supplies from individuals and organizations in the United States and arranged for all transportation. Although certain things were hard to obtain, the men were able to procure such scarce items as a metal surgical table, new kerosene refrigerators, gasoline pumps, and mosquito netting.¹⁰⁰ An example of the success the group experienced in securing supplies occurred when the 315th Air Division air terminal commander wrote him for contributions. The citizens of Tulia, Texas responded by donating 10,000 pounds of white grain Texas wheat and 1000 pounds of clothing and baby food for the more than 700 orphans in Da Nang. The items were transported by aircraft from Detachment I of the, 315th Air Division at Naha Air Base, Okinawa.¹⁰¹ Similar success was experienced with countless other goodwill projects.¹⁰²

The value of these early civic programs is hard to assess in terms of influencing local attitudes. A feasible argument, however, is that as communist terrorism increased and became more indiscriminate, while at the same time the lives of more and more ordinary people were touched by American and Vietnamese humanitarian actions, the position of the South Vietnamese government was strengthened. By helping to demonstrate that Americans were in Vietnam only to support a government faced with communist aggression, civic action served as a tangible counter to communist propaganda claims that the United States was there simply to assume the role of the French "imperialists." The negative process which American civic action received in North Vietnam indicated that such activity did in fact have the positive impact of wooing civilians away from Viet Cong influence. A June 26, 1964, editorial in Hanoi's *Thong Nhat*, for example, stated:

The French colonialists struck at us mainly with military strength and military tricks. We struck back with only military strength and military

tricks. Today with a new type of colonialism and a new type of rapacious warfare, Special War, the enemy uses political schemes to deceive the people.... American imperialists and their lackeys have been forced to use political devices and demagoguery in order to fight the revolutionaries, and they have mobilized powerful persons from among the people to combat the Revolution. They recognized that in today's war political factors have a decided significance; the side that can hold the people is the victor. That is why the Americans urged Diem to have a political program more attractive than the NLFSV program that is why the American imperialists (and their new lackeys)...primarily and ridiculously pretend to be democratic and cordially more solicitous with the people than was Diem...solicitous with the people than was Diem.¹⁰³

A major problem with the practice of civic action in Vietnam, however, was that Americans were usually the ones seen engaging in the civic work. Although numerous Vietnamese military personnel did in fact participate, their activities tended to be less visible. Civilians, for example, had no way of knowing that it was a Vietnamese pilot who had dropped the flares responsible for disrupting a particular Viet Cong attack. On the other hand it was fairly easy to see Americans bandaging wounds or building bridges. In such cases the Vietnamese peasantry had difficulty seeing the link between American humanitarianism and the strength, prestige, and concern of their own government in Saigon.¹⁰⁴ Although there were obvious benefits to be gained from a positive relationship between Vietnamese civilians and American military personnel, U.S. commanders recognized that the lack of a visibly active Vietnamese program was a definite problem. Consequently, advisors often developed plans for specific projects and constantly urged their counterparts to participate.¹⁰⁵ Likewise, on many of the civic projects, such as the "Toys for Tot" program, great care was taken to associate the endeavors with the central government. In the delivery of the toys, for instance, both Maj. Gen. Joseph H. Moore, Second Air Division commander, and Vietnamese Air Vice Marshal Nguyen Cao Ky. personally participated.

The Second Air Division also made an effort to pass its experience with civic action on to the Vietnamese Air Force and encourage it to employ its resources in civic work. In March 1964, Gen. Moore directed that a plan for the Vietnamese Air Force be drawn up with Vietnamese aircraft and Vietnamese airmen assisting their countrymen in the same way civic teams were working in the villages. The program called for aerially evacuating wounded civilians from areas of active combat, airlifting food rations and medical supplies to stranded, isolated, and needy people, and providing transportation to province chiefs who needed air power in order to remain in contact with isolated areas. It also called for Vietnamese airmen to sponsor and provide support to orphanages, hospitals, and schools in remote areas. Once planning for the program was completed, it was turned over to Air Vice Marshal Ky for implementation.¹⁰⁶

The plan encountered several major problems, however. In the first place, national attitudes and military traditions handicapped development of a large scale, successful program. The whole idea of civic action was completely alien to the traditions of both the government and the people.¹⁰⁷ As in many other Asian countries, the Vietnamese had no notion of military responsibility for rural welfare. As one

American officer observed, the Vietnamese were family-oriented, not community oriented.¹⁰⁸ There was therefore an understandable reluctance on the part of most military personnel to engage in activities which raised their countrymen to a higher status of comfort and security than they themselves or their own families enjoyed.¹⁰⁹ Moreover, there was an attitude in Vietnam that when one joined the military service, he set himself apart from and above the ordinary citizenry, and in essence, became a member of the classic warrior "aristocracy." Vietnamese military men thus found it demeaning to be placed in a role of policemen, social workers, or common laborers, and were reluctant to abandon their traditional warrior positions.¹¹⁰ The U.S. military encountered a similar reluctance on the part of the Vietnamese military to forego the use of more sophisticated equipment and weaponry in favor of the simpler tools needed in the conduct of civic action programs.¹¹¹

Not only were members of the armed forces not interested in making themselves popular, they were actually disdainful of civilian peasants, regarding them as legitimate targets for pillage and supplies. Confiscation of scarce village water resources, for example, was a relatively common practice. This attitude was the very antithesis of civic action. It made the task of inducing the military forces to assist in improving the welfare of their less fortunate countrymen a difficult one which required persistent indoctrination to modify.¹¹² Although there were only a few reported occasions of soldiers and airmen actually abusing the population (at which time most commanders dealt harshly and promptly with the offenders), several Americans found instances of negative civic action more common among the Vietnamese than the positive variety the United States was trying to promote.¹¹³ Evidence does not exist to document these cases, but undoubtedly when such actions occurred during combat operations or routine exercises, they tended to provoke fear and hostility among the poorly educated peasants. This was especially significant since contact with the "outside" in many areas was practically nonexistent, and many of the peasants judged their government by the actions of the military during their infrequent visits.¹¹⁴

Despite the existence of at least some questionable military activity, the persistence of an attitude of superiority, and the indisputable negative impact which these attitudes and activities had on the overall perception of the Saigon government, the major problem was still one of omission. As one American noted, there was in Vietnam "a history of missed opportunities to generate popular support for the government by failing to help to improve the lot of the rural population with whom the military was in constant contacts."¹¹⁵ This was largely due to the fact that both officer and enlisted personnel alike lacked full appreciation for a sound civic action program and its importance with respect to ultimate elimination of the Viet Cong. While many senior, high-level commanders recognized the value of civic action and occasionally made efforts to institute worthwhile programs, lower level emphasis was the real deciding factor. If the lower level commander stressed civic action, his unit responded. But since Vietnamese Air Force resources and manpower were usually in short supply, and commanders were under considerable pressure to meet operational requirements, civic action often had to take second place to combat related activities which produced visible results more quickly. The indifference at this level, then, was the chief obstacle to a truly effective civic action effort.¹¹⁶

In order to make the most of those assistance projects which were undertaken, however, the United States, with the aid of the Vietnamese government, embarked

on an active psychological warfare campaign in 1964.¹¹⁷ By this time many Americans had come to appreciate the fact that psychological operations were an integral part of civic action and that every action, military or civil, had a psychological aspect which tended either to encourage or to discourage popular support.¹¹⁸ One of the reasons the strategic hamlet program had collapsed was that the Diem regime had failed to capitalize on the psychological aspects of the plan. And since the administration had not interpreted the program's civic activities to the individual citizen, it had not won his genuine cooperation and emotional involvement. Too often the government had left the peasant out by deciding arbitrarily what projects were to be undertaken, using forced labor to accomplish them, and then expecting the peasant to respond with gratitude and increased allegiance.¹¹⁹ The opposite, in fact, often happened. As a result, it was a relatively simple matter for the Viet Cong to convince the peasant that governmental presence in his village—even though it brought with it various social programs and a higher standard of living—was little more than repression in another form.¹²⁰ To prevent continued loss of support, the Vietnamese government would have to wage war like the guerrilla and keep the peasant informed about its activities and how those activities affected him.

Although aircraft from the Farmgate detachment of the U.S. Air Force had delivered written and audible psychological material to the enemy and the local population since its arrival in Vietnam in November 1961, the idea had caught on very slowly among the Vietnamese on whom the major responsibility necessarily had to rest.¹²¹ Between June 1962 and January 1963, for example, Vietnamese C-47 pilots flew only twenty-two psychological warfare missions, and the record did not improve during 1963.¹²² After the demise of the strategic hamlet program, the Vietnamese continued to show little evidence that they recognized the importance of such work, allowing even the important Chieu Hoi amnesty program to fall to pieces. On a trip to South Vietnam in the spring of 1964, Carl T. Rowan, United States Information Agency director, confirmed these observations, finding the South Vietnamese improperly organized, inadequately funded, and ill-trained to operate an effective information and propaganda program. They were simply too busy fighting military battles and trying to establish a stable national government to devote much time to such an effort.¹²³

For its part, the United States psychological operations work was also splintered. The U.S. Military Assistance Command for Vietnam, the U.S. Information Service, and the Agency for International Development were each responsible for one or more aspects of the program, but these separate agencies operated, in large measure, independently of one another without a master psychological plan. The United States also lacked sufficient numbers of informational experts to carry out a determined campaign. Moreover, most of those experts were generally concentrated in Saigon where there was little opportunity for contact with rural elements of the population. Likewise, resources were often in short supply. The Military Assistance Command, for example, did not have a high speed printing press until the spring of 1964 when the Pacific Command provided one. And few of the units involved in informational programs had the linguistic training required to be really effective.¹²⁴

It was just at this time, however, while the Khanh government was fighting for its survival, that a strong, well-coordinated informational effort was needed most. Consequently Rowan proposed a sharp increase in both personnel and equipment for an expanded leaflet and loudspeaker program. President Johnson approved the

proposal on April 28, 1964.¹²⁵ The resulting program selected several different areas for concentrated emphasis. One aspect of the new proposal called for a stepped-up effort to reach the Viet Cong guerrilla who was caught between the options of "win or die." Among insurgents, surrender or desertion was unthinkable, no matter how poor their conditions, if they believed they would be executed by their captors or separated from their families. The backbone of effective psychological operations would therefore have to be a revitalized national amnesty program to offer the insurgent an alternative. The new program for psychological warfare was also geared to communicate with the peasant in his hamlet in order to instill confidence in the local government's ability to give him protection, economic betterment, and a just system of administration. But since neither the enemy soldier nor the peasant would be convinced of administrative competence and goodwill by words alone, the third aspect of the political campaign had to be motivating the South Vietnamese government and military organization to increase their civic action effort. And finally, an attempt would be made to persuade every member of both the American and Vietnamese armed forces to employ principles of good conduct when they came in contact with rural people. Not all of these elements received the same emphasis nor were they all implemented at one time, but by the end of 1965 they had all received some attention and were beginning to have a decided impact on the war effort.¹²⁶

The first action undertaken to meet the propaganda deficit was the establishment of an interagency psychological operations committee. The new committee had the backing of President Johnson as well as all American elements in Vietnam. Represented on the committee were U.S. Information Service, economic assistance, and embassy officials, as well as military personnel from each branch of the armed forces. This American committee developed plans and coordinated its activities with a similar Vietnamese psychological operations committee. A joint field services committee, directed by an American Information Service officer but staffed with representatives from other agencies, was then organized to take the new campaign into the countryside. In addition, in each of the forty-two provinces American advisors set up a smaller-scale committee with instructional apparatus to teach the Vietnamese Information Service and Vietnamese military information teams the techniques of propaganda and psychological warfare. Americans also gave the South Vietnamese assistance in making and distributing films, leaflets, and posters and in other propaganda activities.¹²⁷

In order to persuade the Vietnamese to undertake welfare projects to support their words with deeds, American advisors developed several indoctrination courses for Vietnamese commanders. A special visit to Taiwan for high government officials and their American advisors was also arranged to observe the civic action program in progress there.¹²⁸ One of the outgrowths of this visit was the establishment of a Vietnamese political warfare organization in October 1964 which had primary responsibility for solving noncombat military problems, working out civic-military relationships, conducting civic action, and inducing the insurgent to rally to the government side. A specially dispatched Chinese delegation supervised each stage of development, and in May 1965 the political warfare division of the U.S. military command in Vietnam assumed the task of providing the U.S. advisory effort.¹²⁹ As a subdivision of this general political warfare system, the Vietnamese Air Force set up a political warfare directorate with headquarters at Tan Son Nhut and officers assigned to each wing. Initially the United States provided the Vietnamese six U-6A

and four U-17A utility aircraft and the equipment needed to modify them to carry out the psychological warfare work.¹³⁰

By 1965 the intensified psychological operations campaign had started to bear fruit. At the end of August 1964, for example, Tan Ba, a village with a population of 2,000 located twenty miles north of Saigon, was one of seventeen villages (out of a total of twenty-one) in Phoc Thanh Province which had fallen under complete Viet Cong domination. The communists maintained control through a combination of both persuasion and terror. After the Saigon government had set a goal of realigning itself with Tan Ba inhabitants, South Vietnamese Army troops cleared the village and surrounding farm land of Viet Cong guerrillas and stationed a security force in each of the several hamlets comprising the village. Following the distribution of leaflets explaining governmental objectives, a specially trained South Vietnamese political and social action cadre moved into the village. They handed out simple gifts like soap, needles, candy, and notebooks, and then interviewed the peasants to find out what was needed and wanted.

Over the next few months, a new school was built and a teacher obtained. A clinic was started. Several wells were dug, bridges and homes were repaired, and immediate assistance was given to the needy. The Vietnamese teams encouraged Tan Ba villagers to share in the work on each of the improvement projects undertaken, and after each was completed, a sign in Vietnamese was posted which read: "Another self help project with the help of your local government." Probably knowing that destroying the work which had been shared in by the villagers would create hard feelings against them, the Viet Cong did not interfere.

Then through a variety of more obvious psychological techniques, the political and civic action cadres propagandized the benefits of governmental rule. A traveling drama team visited the village, but instead of using the previously ineffective name-calling Technique to criticize the Viet Cong, the minstrels extolled the achievements and good intentions of the local government. There were also the usual wall posters and political buttons designed to reinforce positive civic action forces even provided free wrapping paper, printed with pro-government advertisements, for goods sold at the local market place and medicines obtained at the clinic. Through a combination of these tactics, the political teams and the local government gradually won the confidence and respect of Tan Ba inhabitants. By the spring of 1965 the fear of Viet Cong retaliation had eased to such an extent that the peasants had begun providing names of Viet Cong sympathizers and volunteering other information on communist activities. Some of the farmers who had defected voluntarily to the Viet Cong side also returned when they heard about the progress being made in their village.¹³¹

A change in attitude similar to that experienced in Tan Ba occurred in several other villages during this same time period. These successes were made possible through a variety of psychological operations and new communicative techniques developed and provided by the United States. Americans continued to build up South Vietnamese radio capabilities, for example, allowing the government to reach more and more areas with protective and informative advice and entertainment. Voice of America broadcasts to North Vietnam were increased. Americans provided the inspiration behind a monthly farm magazine, *Rural Spirit*, which reached a circulation of 250,000 with informative tips for the peasant on how to improve his crop yields. And they also oversaw the production of numerous newsreels, documentaries, and movies, all conveying a distinctly pro-government message.¹³²

Nonetheless, radios, magazines, and civic cadres could not reach all areas of South Vietnam, and for this reason the government had to rely upon air power as the only rapid means of communication with much of the rural population. Within the Second Air Division, most of the responsibility for carrying the administration's warnings and promises rested with the four U-10 Helio Super Courier aircraft of the 1st Air Commando Squadron. Three of these planes were equipped with speakers and were authorized to begin loudspeaker broadcasts to supplement Vietnamese operations in May 1963. By the end of the year 805 psychological warfare missions had been flown.¹³³ Use of the planes increased in 1964 as more and more territory slipped from government control and as the United States saw a greater need to enhance President Khanh's image throughout the country.

The leaflets and broadcasts carried a variety of messages. Some of them served a civil function. They capitulated civilians to stay clear of military installations during the night curfew. And they alerted peasants of impending air and ground operations, directing them to prepared collection points. Other messages were designed more specifically to increase the influence of the central government. These related Viet Cong atrocities and government victories and told of the statement that could be expected from the government, the dangers of rendering aid to insurgents, and the reasons for the presence of U.S. troops and planes. Experience proved that voice broadcasts were generally more effective than leaflets in delivering these messages, though broadcasts from aircraft were sometimes inaudible. Voice transmission worked particularly well when the targets were specific individuals or groups. The illiteracy rate was also as high as eighty-five percent in some areas, and leaflets consequently would not reach as many people.¹³⁴

A well-publicized example of the value of taped broadcasts in supporting civic action was a special U-10 mission flown in support of Father Hoa, the famed Chinese priest who maintained a government community in Bac Lieu Province, although surrounded by Viet Cong. Father Hoa had opened a new hospital and wanted the people of the surrounding areas to know about it. A taped message by the priest was obtained and broadcast by a U-10 over the area. The following day 1500 people from Viet Cong-held areas showed up at the hospital for treatment. During the second day another 1,000 appeared. The U-10s were also used during the disastrous floods of central Vietnam in late 1964 to relay messages to the victims. And in conjunction with defoliation missions, U.S. crews transmitted warnings to civilians to stay away from treated crops and to avoid eating anything which could have been contaminated.¹³⁵

Many aerial missions were also flown over Viet Cong troop concentrations and over North Vietnam. In the case of out-of-country leaflet drops, the U-10s were sometimes joined in the work by C-130s, F-105s, and F-4s.¹³⁶ When Viet Cong were the targeted audience, the objective of the psychological operations was to encourage defections. In 1963, President Diem had said that "every time we kill a Viet Cong, a Vietnamese dies."¹³⁷ If the enemy could be encouraged to throw down his weapons and surrender, a life could be spared. In addition, it was much cheaper to change the attitudes of a communist than it was to kill him. It was estimated that it cost the United States \$127 to convert a communist, whereas it took almost \$300,000 to kill one.¹³⁸

Initially, Viet Cong who wanted to defect had no assurance that they would not be shot if they did so, as communist propaganda claimed.¹³⁹ Consequently, it required considerable time and effort to build up credibility for such a program. And messages

delivered over loudspeakers or in printed form had to be very carefully prepared with an in-depth knowledge of Vietnamese psychology. After considerable experimentation it was found that leaflets tended to be more successful in reaching the Viet Cong insurgents than the population in general. One early survey showed that as many as ninety percent of the Viet Cong who defected had learned of the Chieu Hoi program through psychological warfare leaflets. Half of those surveyed mentioned leaflets as the most effective weapon in causing them and their cohorts to lose faith in the communist cause. However, they also listed the U.S. alliance with South Vietnam and poor living conditions as contributing to their decision to defect.¹⁴⁰ Picking up on these points of vulnerability, the United States made the futility of the Viet Cong effort and U.S. determination to stay in Vietnam the major themes in its psychological campaign. In addition, leaflets and broadcasts carried instructions on how to return to the government side.¹⁴¹ U-10s were then sent out on missions over major infiltration routes. According to various reports issued by the National Interrogation Center, most trails were literally covered with leaflets.¹⁴²

Thousands of Viet Cong responded to these appeals. A single psychological warfare mission using U-10 aircraft at times resulted in over a hundred enemy troops or supporters returning to governmental control. After they had been rehabilitated, those who rallied were in turn employed very effectively in various psychological capacities, with some joining armed propaganda teams and civil development cadres. A few served as "Kit Carson Scouts." These specially selected and trained ralliers guided American and South Vietnamese forces on missions into Viet Cong territory.¹⁴³ The intelligence provided by returnees was also used in many instances to discover arms caches, to locate guerrilla forces, and to identify leadership elements within Viet Cong ranks.

PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE-LEAFLETS FOR AIR DROP OVER

NORTH VIETNAM

Leaflet 1: Compatriots of North Viet Nam, recently the Armed Forces of RVN bombed the main roads and bridges of North Viet Nam. This is self-defense action to stop the aggression of the Ho Chi Minh clique, lackeys of the Red Chinese. The Government and Armed Forces of the RVN only destroy the military bases and road network of the Communists in North Viet Nam. We avoid doing harm to your compatriots' lives and properties. To protect yourselves, please keep away from the Communists' military installations and oppose the Communists' plot to send your sons and husbands to die in South Viet Nam.

Leaflet 2: In order to stop the cruel. Communists from killing our innocent compatriots in SVN. The Government and Armed Forces of the RVN have destroyed the military installations and road network of North Vietnamese. The air strikes were aimed at the Communist military installations but not at the compatriots of North Vietnam, We love peace but if the Communist of NVN persist in their aggression, the air strikes will be continued on a wider scale until the Communists stop the killings in SVN. To protect yourselves, please keep away from the Communist military installations, office, industrial plants and important communications axes. The air strikes are aimed at stopping aggression of Red China.

Leaflet 3: Who betray the people?

The Communists signed the Fountainebleau agreement in 1946 with the French allowing the French to land troops in VN. The Communists signed the Geneva Accords with the French, dividing the country and giving half of VN to the colonialists. In 1956 the Communists started the aggression war against South VN, on orders of the Red Chinese.

In the past 10 years the Communists invited the Red Chinese into North Viet Nam and applied a cruel dictatorial rule over the people of North Viet Nam. In the past 10 years the Communists were hired by the Red Chinese to wage a war of aggression against the people of South Viet Nam.

Who commit all the crimes?—The Viet Cong.

Who plunge the people into war and destruction?—The Viet Cong.

Who act as lackeys of the Red Chinese to enslave the people?—The Viet Cong.

*Source: Hist, 2d AD, Jan-Jun 65, Vol II, Support Document 62.

The testimonies of Viet Cong defectors proved invaluable in reaching other insurgents. One former Viet Cong sergeant taped a message unveiling communist falsehoods. He proclaimed that conditions were better in the South than in the North and that the Viet Cong were actually fighting other Vietnamese—not just Americans as communist propaganda claimed. When the message was played over an area in the northern part of South Vietnam, sixty-eight Viet Cong rallied to the government. In another case, the personal appeal of a communist defector just six hours after he arrived in a government camp was printed in leaflet form and dropped over his former Viet Cong unit. The leaflets plus a taped testimonial encouraged many of his comrades to join him.¹⁴⁴

The U-10 usually performed its mission by flying in circles over groups of houses or along canals and roadways. The crew would broadcast a message on the first orbit and repeat the initial message on subsequent orbits. A typical mission lasted about four hours. Each plane equipped for voice deliveries carried two 125-watt speakers that were effective only at very low altitudes of from 500 to 1,000 feet. As with transport aircraft, the U-10 was thus extremely vulnerable to ground fire. This limited the plane to relatively safe areas, decreasing its tactical value to some extent. The aircraft's short takeoff and landing characteristics, however, allowed it to be operated out of the many small airstrips throughout South Vietnam. It could also land on roads and open fields when necessary. This was especially helpful on the battlefield. Many times a U-10 would land at the scene of a battle and those aboard would tape the comments of a prisoner or defector. The tape would then be immediately broadcast to the retreating survivors of that man's unit. The results were usually excellent. By the end of 1965 broadcasts and leaflet drops had been made throughout the four corps zones of South Vietnam and from Quang Tri Province in the north to the tip of the Ca Mau Peninsula in the South.¹⁴⁵

The psychological warfare work was not without a number of significant problems, however. The lack of recognition among the Vietnamese of its importance continued to hamper the effort through 1965. Of the ten single-engine aircraft which had been assigned to the Vietnamese Air Force for conversion to psychological warfare duty, only five (four U-17s and one U-6) had been modified for speaker operations by 1966. The Vietnamese experienced many complications when trying to install the speakers which were issued to them with the planes. They also seemed more concerned about converting aircraft to fighter status. In addition, Vietnamese Air Force personnel used the aircraft which they did modify only for missions in and around Saigon. Consequently, most broadcasts had to be performed by the three American U-10s which were equipped with operational speakers.¹⁴⁶

The South Vietnamese were also negligent in giving support to the Chieu Hoi program. During the last year of the Diem administration the United States had exerted enough pressure to get the program accepted by the majority of government officials.¹⁴⁷ But after Diem's assassination, execution of the program steadily deteriorated until it reached an all-time low at the end of 1964.¹⁴⁸ Many times, leaflets and broadcasts induced the Viet Cong to join the legitimate government only to find the South Vietnamese not prepared to welcome them with the "open arms" they had promised. This occurred in many areas where rehabilitation centers were either nonexistent or so poorly manned they could not accommodate more than a few defectors at once. At one point in 1964 four thousand would-be ralliers defected en masse in the delta region, but because officials in the area did not understand the

program and were not prepared to handle large numbers of defectors, all of them eventually rejoined the communists.¹⁴⁹

Several shortcomings in the way the United States practiced psychological warfare also had their impact on the overall progress of the effort. As originally envisioned the Vietnamese Air Force would carry out the greater part of the program with Americans acting only as advisors. For this reason the United States designated ten aircraft for use by the South Vietnamese while reserving only four U-10s for American use. When the Vietnamese failed to respond as the United States had hoped, however, and as the requirements for airborne psychological operations increased, it became clear that more American-controlled aircraft were needed. Moreover, in September 1964 one U-10 was lost in an accident and the original six pilots slots were not filled when they became vacant. By November only two Vietnamese Air Force U-10 pilots remained on duty to handle the increasingly heavy workload.¹⁵⁰ U.S. Air Force effectiveness was further degraded by poor area and language orientation for aircrews. In the early years of U.S. Air Force presence in Vietnam, before the buildup of psychological warfare forces, Americans were in daily contact with their Vietnamese counterparts. Many American pilots, however, understood neither the language nor the cultural mores of the Vietnamese. As a result some crews were counterproductive and others never developed an effective working relationship with their counterparts.¹⁵¹ Moreover, because most U.S. aircrews were not fluent in the language, not only could they not make their own tapes to respond to an immediate need, but they often did not know the content of the messages delivered. The consequences of this condition were further exacerbated by the fact that the Second Air Division was not responsible for the preparation of any psychological warfare material nor did it have a printing capability. Generally it had to depend on the U.S. Army, Vietnamese military forces, the Military Assistance Command, and the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency for material and targets. Tapes and leaflets were sometimes prepared at the provincial level by provincial officials and were broadcast or dispersed to one or more specific communities as the province chiefs directed. At times American pilots found themselves employed directly by the province chiefs, with little authority or ability to help choose times, targets, mediums, or messages in preparation for psychological missions. This led to considerable confusion and duplication of effort.¹⁵² The blame for these conditions, however, rested as much on poor coordination and control as on inadequate cultural orientation. Despite the earlier attempt to consolidate the program by coordinating activities undertaken by the various American services and agencies with those carried out by the South Vietnamese, performance continued to fall short of expectations.

Throughout 1965 the United States took steps to eliminate some of the problems which continued to plague the program. Unified direction for psychological actions was finally achieved in April. At that time the National Security Council authorized establishment of a new U.S. Mission organization, the Joint U.S. Public Affairs Office, bringing together Defense, U.S. Information Service, Agency for International Development, and other American personnel connected with psychological warfare, civic action, and the amnesty program.¹⁵³ Barry Zorthian, an expert in the informational field and the Counselor of Public Affairs at the American Embassy in Saigon, became its first director with responsibility for formulating policy, coordinating all U.S. psychological operations in Vietnam, and maintaining close liaison with elements of the Vietnamese government engaged in the same effort.¹⁵⁴

The new office handled all administrative concerns, such as budgeting, personnel, supplies, and housing. A planning and research division evaluated the U.S. program through attitude surveys and opinion sampling. It also analyzed Viet Cong propaganda and studied the psychological vulnerabilities of the enemy. A field development division aided the Vietnamese with planning and development of psychological programs for the provinces and with advice and assistance on the amnesty program. And a technical service division produced such materials as leaflets, posters newspapers, songs, skits, and tape-recorded loudspeaker messages and maintained engineering and technical facilities for other forms of audio-visual communications.¹⁵⁵

This centralization of U.S. policy-formulation, administration, research, and technical expertise for an integrated psychological warfare program was a milestone. Although some problems and anomalies later developed within the new organization requiring further modifications, its erection in the spring of 1965 gave a tremendous boost to military psychological operations. With the establishment of the Public Affairs Office, Gen. Westmoreland at Military Assistance Command headquarters reorganized his civic action and psychological warfare staff into a Political Warfare Advisory Directorate. The Air Force secured increased representation in the new organization, reflecting a growing appreciation for the significant psychological impact of air operations in Vietnam.¹⁵⁶ Authorization was also procured for the deployment of a psychological operations battalion and an air commando squadron to Vietnam to support United States and Vietnamese combat operations. The 5th Air Commando Squadron arrived in July 1965. The twelve C-47 and sixteen U-10 aircraft assigned to the squadron were equipped with loudspeaker, leaflet dispensers, and other equipment needed to carry out the expanded psychological operations program.¹⁵⁷ The next month the Special Air Warfare Center completed two additional military civic action motion pictures. One of them was designed to acquaint Air Force and other governmental personnel with the unique capabilities of air power in psychological warfare.¹⁵⁸

Military psychological operations, however, were not limited to those carried out by specialized military units. As with other nation-building programs, each individual soldier, sailor, marine, and airman played a part as well. American servicemen were in almost constant contact with their Vietnamese counterparts and with villagers in one capacity or another. Their attitude and actions, like those of Vietnamese military personnel, generated either positive or negative reactions in the people, and therefore to the central government they were supposed to be aiding.¹⁵⁹ A recklessly driven military vehicle, haughtiness, or outright hostility, for example, would only drive civilians over to the other side. The Viet Cong, moreover, were always quick to turn such bad behavior to their own advantage. Realizing, then, that each U.S. serviceman was a powerful propagandist, American military commanders issued each U.S. military man a pocket-size card listing "nine rules of conduct." Emphasis was placed on becoming personal friends to Vietnamese military personnel and civilians and helping them individually, using phrases from their language, honoring their customs and laws, making no special demands, and treating women with politeness and respect. Loud, rude, or unusual behavior as well as an open display of wealth were discouraged because they alienated the military from the people.¹⁶⁰ It was hoped that if the men applied the basic common courtesies on the card, they would help to evoke positive support for the South Vietnamese war effort.¹⁶¹

*Nine Rules For Personnel of U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam:
The Vietnamese have paid a heavy price in suffering for men are
in Vietnam now because their government has asked us to help
its soldiers and people in winning their struggle. The Viet Cong
will attempt to turn the Vietnamese people against you. You can
defeat them at every turn by the strength, understanding, and
generosity you display with the people. Here are nine simple
rules:*

- 1. Remember we are guests here: We make no demands
and seek no special treatment.*
- 2. Join with the people! Understand their life, use phrases
from their language, and honor their customs and laws.*
- 3. Treat women with politeness and respect.*
- 4. Make personal friends among the soldiers and common
people.*
- 5. Always give the Vietnamese the right of way.*
- 6. Be alert to security and ready to react with your
military skill.*
- 7. Don't attract attention by loud, rude or unusual
behavior.*
- 8. Avoid separating yourself from the people by a display
of wealth or privilege.*
- 9. Above all else, you are members of the U.S. Military
Forces on a difficult mission, responsible for all your
official and personal actions. Reflect honor upon yourself
and the United States of America.*

*Source: Adm. U. S. G. Sharp USN, and Gen. W. C. Westmoreland, USA, Report
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Proof of increased U.S. understanding of Vietnamese psychology showed up with several new innovations introduced into the practice of psychological operations and civic actions. In operations conducted over communist strongholds or insurgent camps, U-10s or C-47s would broadcast Buddhist funeral music for prolonged periods. On occasion the music would be interrupted by weeping voices. In one broadcast, for example, a Vietnamese voice pleaded with survivors of an aerial attack:

Oh my children! Oh my wife! My dear children! Here I am; I come back to you. But I am dead! What a pity! I have come back to you to let you know that I am Dead! I have died needlessly. But it was too late when I finally realized that I was wrong to have joined the Viet Cong.

Friends, you are still alive. You still have a chance. You still have a chance to see your loved ones, Rally now! Do not hesitate any longer!

You still have time to rally. Rally now to save yourselves, my friends, If you do not, you will not be able to escape from death, You will be killed as I was: Rally now! Rally! Rally immediately before it is too late!¹⁶²

These broadcasts were often used in combination with psychological warfare leaflets printed on Vietnamese funeral notice paper rather than on normal American paper.¹⁶³ At other times psychological warfare planes were used simply to harass the enemy continuously day and night by broadcasting loud noises or dropping an occasional explosive in areas where Viet Cong were trying to sleep.¹⁶⁴ Such broadcasts proved very effective. Interviews with communist defectors revealed that indefinite separation from home and family; weariness caused by disruption of camps and interruption of rest, cooking, and food supply; and fear of American artillery and bombs seriously undermined cadre morale and combat effectiveness. And when these factors were combined with an attractive and well-publicized amnesty program, they became impelling reasons to desert or to repatriate to the legal government.¹⁶⁵ For example, a captured North Vietnamese main force soldier said: "After each [air] attack I felt so disgusted and fed up that I just wanted to leave at the first opportunity."¹⁶⁶

American pilots also learned to use chemical sprays to good psychological advantage. Although only a few had actually seen the effects of spraying, by the end of 1965 most Viet Cong had heard of such operations either from communist propaganda or from popular rumors. In general they were convinced that the spray was extremely toxic and that it caused many deaths. Ironically many believed their own propaganda that the South Vietnamese were actually engaged in chemical warfare and that the spray was a poisonous gas. Interviews with Viet Cong prisoners of war and defectors indicate that their units often avoided crossing defoliated areas and flatly refused to camp in them. Several reported that they had been issued a "medication" which, when applied to their faces, safeguarded against the effects of the spray. Some units went hungry as a result of the spraying. Many food-growing cadres often abandoned fields that had been sprayed and moved to another area to clear and plant new ones. Thus, crop spraying seriously aggravated the already difficult problem the Viet Cong had of providing adequate food and forced them to increase their demands on the population. It also caused them to devote more manpower to food production and transportation. Likewise, jungle defoliation made military operations more difficult since the Viet Cong, according to one interviewee, "lost many places where their troops could hide," and caused them to spend more time in evasive action. Another respondent reported that spraying along canals prevented his unit from attacking passing naval sampans of the South Vietnamese government.¹⁶⁷ One guerrilla platoon leader captured in 1965 summarized the feeling of many of his comrades when he said:

As I see it, everything will probably be over in the course of this year and the South Vietnamese government will win this war, because I have noticed that the majority of people have begun to side with the government and you know that the outcome of this war depends more on the population than on arms. Another no less important factor is that man can't eat dirt and be on the move indefinitely.¹⁶⁸

These many actions undertaken to help convince the Vietnamese villager and Viet Cong insurgent that support for the Saigon government would be to their advantage, began to show positive results during the last half of 1965. In June, 1965 alone, some 6,000 Viet Cong and their supporters returned to government control, with the aerial broadcasts and with aerial drops of printed matter playing a major part.¹⁶⁹ And in arguing for the success of the Chieu Hoi program, the South Vietnamese government claimed in May 1965 that some 20,000 Viet Cong had defected since the program's inception in 1963.¹⁷⁰ The best indication of the effectiveness of such activities, however, was the Viet Cong's determination to destroy the planes engaged in such work. The hazards of psychological warfare duty increased proportionately with its success. Then unable to fire at the planes, the Viet Cong, in at least one instance, tried to drown out the sounds of the loudspeaker by banging pots and pans together.¹⁷¹ The standing order among the insurgents against possession of leaflets also attested to Viet Cong fears of their effectiveness. One enemy document captured in 1965 recommended "trials" for civilians who listened to loudspeaker broadcasts or picked up leaflets.¹⁷² In some areas Viet Cong propagandists even fabricated a myth about poisoned leaflets.¹⁷³

In their civic undertakings Americans also learned through numerous bad experiences that understanding Vietnamese psychology paid off. One of the major difficulties Americans encountered with assistance projects was one which hampered them in other areas as well: their inability to understand and communicate adequately with the very people they were trying to help. When, for example, special forces personnel built pigsties for one Montagnard community, they went unused because the Americans had not put forth enough time and effort to determine the needs and desires of the people. The villagers had no reason to use the pens since, as one tribesman remarked, the pigs "had always run around loose." In another instance, Vietnamese peasants fed expensive imported wheat to their livestock because it was not one of the items in their normal diet, and Montagnard villagers used tin sheeting for everything but its intended use because "You can't make babies under tin roofs." Similarly medical treatments sometimes violated cultural taboos. And although advanced irrigation pumps and windmills allowed Vietnamese peasants to grow their crops with minimum effort, simple foot-powered pumps would not have caused the serious unemployment problems which resulted when the others were installed.¹⁷⁴ In at least one case commercial fertilizer supplied under the agricultural aid program caused villagers to side with the Viet Cong. The farmers had not received adequate instructions on its use and literally destroyed their plants by applying the entire year's supply on a single crop.¹⁷⁵ Under such circumstances it was not hard for otherwise loyal South Vietnamese villagers to believe Viet Cong propaganda that American planes air-dropped poisoned candy to the children or that herbicides were meant to destroy their crops.¹⁷⁶ And almost inevitably when trust between the two cultures broke down in one area, the villagers became more susceptible to Viet Cong propaganda in others as well.

However, American advisors eventually began receiving more linguistic and cultural training. When this occurred and as the communication links between the government and the people became better established, many of these problems disappeared. Just a little language study enabled Americans to better understand the cultural environment in which they had to work. They also learned something about the Vietnamese people and their values through close association with their language

instructors. In addition, Vietnamese pilots were required to learn English in conjunction with their flight training, and this, too, eased tension to a large extent and provided insights into the American way of life.¹⁷⁷

Gradually, then, through joint training programs and through the many lessons learned when the communication process broke down completely, both Americans and Vietnamese were able to lengthen their strides in building up the South Vietnamese government. Real progress in the battle for Vietnamese loyalties, however, would have to await the establishment of a stable government in Saigon and a renewed realization among military and civilian decision-makers that there was another side to the war in Vietnam besides the military.

Notes

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113. *Ibid*, Ekem, "Military Civic Action as an Instrument of Foreign Aid," p. 38; Leon Goure, A. J. Rusoo, and D. Scott, *Some Findings of the Viet-Cong Motivation and Morale Study*: June-December 1965 (RM-491 I-ISA/ARPA, Santa Monica, 1966), p 10.
114. Memo, Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet, to Commander in Chief, Pacific,

- subj: Counterinsurgency Lessons Learned, Feb 16, 1963; memo, Chief of Staff, USA, to Joint Chiefs of Staff, subj: Psychological Warfare Reports, Jun 6, 1962.
115. Times debriefing, Jun 10, 1964.
116. Memo, Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet, to Commander in Chief, Pacific, subj: Counterinsurgency Lessons Learned, Feb 16, 1963; Times debriefing, Jun 10, 1964; talk paper, for Meeting with Sec of Def, Hq PACAF, subj: Civic Action Program, South Vietnam, Oct 8, 1962.
117. Psychological Warfare is defined by the Air Force as "the planned use of propaganda and other psychological actions having the primary purpose of influencing the opinions, emotions, attitudes, and behavior of hostile foreign groups in such a way as to support the achievement of national objectives." *Glossary of Counterinsurgency Terms* (Maxwell AFB, Ala.: Air University, 1964), p 4.
118. Report, Special Assistant to the Chief of Staff, USA. for Warfare Activities, to Chief of Staff, USA, subj: Special Warfare Activities Field Inspection Visit to Okinawa, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, and Malaya, May 2, 1962; memo, Chief of Staff, USA, to Joint Chiefs of Staff, subj: Psychological Warfare Reports, Jun 6, 1962; Harold F. Bentz, Jr. "Psychological Warfare and Civic Action," Jul 63, special section.
119. Baldwin, "Key Factors in Vietnam," p. 10.
120. William F. Johnston, Col., USA, "Neglected Deterrent: *Psychological Operations in Liberation Wars*, Transition (Arlington, Va." Foreign Affairs Executive Seminar Foreign Service Institute, Jan 68, pp. 58-65.
121. Record, Third Secretary of Defense Conference, Hickam AFB, Hawaii, Feb 19, 1962.
122. Robert F. Futrell, *The United States Air Force in Southeast Asia: The Advisory Years To 1965* (Washington, D.C.: Office of Air Force History, 1980), p. 250.
123. Robert Cahn, "New U.S. Tactic: Vietnam Idea War," *Christian Science Monitor*, Apr 9, 1965, p. 9.
124. Ronald D. McLaLirin, Carl F. Rosenthal, and Sarah A. Skillings, eds, *The Art and Science of Psychological Operations: Case Studies of Military Application* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 1976), p. 225; hist, CINCPAC, 1904, p. 350.
125. *DOD Pentagon Papers*, Bk 3, IV.c. 1, p. 39.
126. Hist, CINCPAC, 1964, pp. 349,-35 1; *Escalation of the War in Southeast Asia*, pp. 16-18; Johnson, "Neglected Deterrent," pp. 60-62; Cahn, "New U.S. Tactic," p. 9.
127. Cahn, "Now U.S. Tactic," p. 9.
128. Hist, CINCPAC, 1964, p. 347.
129. *Political Warfare Handbook for Advisors*, USMACV, n.d., p. 2.
130. Futrell, *Advisory Years*, p. 251.
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132. Lt. Col. William F. Long, Jr., "Counterinsurgency: Some Antecedents for Success," *Military-Review*, Oct 63, pp. 1997.
133. Hist, 2 AD, Jan-Jun 64, I, pp. 7-8.
134. Peterson and Reinhardt, Role of Airpower in *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, p. 10; Capt John J. McGuire, Jr, USAFR, "Psychological Limits of USAF Effectiveness in SEA" Thesis, Air Command and Staff College, Jun 71), p. 112; Goure, *Some Findings of the Viet Cong Motivation and Morale*, title, p. 33.
135. Sams, *Civic Action Role of Air Power*, pp. 11-12.
136. McGuire, "Psychological Limits," p. 1 10; Goure, *Some Findings of the Viet Cong*

Motivation and Morale Study, p. 33.

137. Civic Action Role of Air Power, p. 18.

138. Robert W. Komer gave the estimate of "\$127 per Rallyer" and Senator Richard B. Russell provided the figure for the combat cost of killing one Viet Cong, See Bob Considine, "Pacification Cadres," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Sep 19, 1967. In 1969 the military civic action selection of the Seventh Air Force provided slightly different statistics: "It cost \$26,000 to kill each of \$7,200,000 men in World War I. It is presently costing over \$55,000 to kill each Viet Cong. We have expended about \$125 for each VC defector through psychological operations/civic action." Quoted in Lt. Col. Malcolm S. Bounds, "Military Civic Action," *Air University Review*, May-Jun 69, pp. 68-73.

139. John Ozaki, "Defense Operations," *Military Review*, Mar 69, pp. 71-78.

140. McGuire, "Psychological Limits," p. 113.

141. Johnston, "Neglected Deterrent," pp. 62-64.

142. McGuire, "Psychological Limits," p. 112.

143. Maj D. R. Smith, *Psychological Operations USAF/VNAF* (Proj CHECO, Hickam AFB, Hawaii, 1968), p. 11.

144. Sams, "Civic Action Role of Air Power," p. 11; Capt. Robert L. Vining, *Air Operations in the Delta* (Proj CHECO, Hickam AFB, Hawaii, 1967), pp. 26-27.

145. Hist, 2d AD, Jan-Jun 65, I, 80-82; McGuire, "Psychological Limit," p. 113; study, *U.S. Air Force in Southeast Asia: Background Information* (70-5, Ofc of Info, Sec of AF, Washington, D.C. n.d.), people.

146. Hist, 2d AD, Jan-Jun 65, I, 81-82; Futrell, *Advisory Years*, pp. 250-251.

147. Intv, Maj. Lyn R. Officer and Hugh N. Ahmann with Lt. Col. Victor H. Lipsey, Feb 12, 1973.

148. This occurred largely because the program was associated with Diem and became politically unpopular after his overthrow. Smith, *Psychological Operations* by USAF/VNAF, p. 10.

149. Blaufarb, *Counterinsurgency Era*, p. 217.

150. Hist, 2d AD, Jan-Jun 65, I, 81-82; Futrell, *Advisory Years*, pp. 250-51.

151. Gerald C. Hickey, *The American Military Advisor and His Foreign Counterpart: The Case of Vietnam* (RM-4482-ARPA, Santa Monica, 1965), p. 22.

152. McGuire, 152. "McGuire Psychological Limits," pp. 111-13.

153. Hist, Dir/Plans., USAF, Jan 1-Jun 30, 1965, Vol 28, p. 275.

154. Irving R. Wechsler, "USIA's Mission and Responsibilities," in Murray G. Lawson, *The United States Information Agency During the Administration of Lyndon B. Johnson*, November 1963-January 1969, Volume I: *Administration History* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1968).

155. John H. Henderson, *The United States Information* (New York:Frederick A. Praeger, 1969). pp. 251-254.

156. Hist, Dir/Plan Sr USAF, Jan I-Jun 30, 1965, Vol 27, pp. 275-276; Jul 1-Dec 31, 1965, Vol 29, pp. 330-331; intvw, Maj. Samuel E. Riddlebarger and Lt. Col. Valentino Castellina with Lt. Gen. Joseph H. Moore, Nov 22, 1969.

157. Special Air Warfare Force Analysis, Dir/Plans, USAF, Mar 1, 1967, p. 11-5-8; Annual Report, Sec of Def, 1965, p. 132.

158. Hist, Dir/Plans, USAF, Jan I-Jun 30, 1965, Vol 28, pp 283-284.

159. Times debriefing, Jun 10, 1964.

160. Compare these to Mao Tse-tung's "Three Rules and Eight Remarks": "All actions

are subject to command. Do not steal from the people. Be neither selfish nor unjust. Replace the door when you leave the house. Roll up the bedding on which you have slept, Be courteous. Be honest in your transactions. Return what you borrow. Replace what you break. Do not bathe in the presence of women. Do not without authority search the pocketbooks of those you arrest." Brig. Gen. Samuel B. Griffith, USMC (Ret), trans, *Mao Tse-tuna On Guerrilla Warfare*, (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1961/65), p. 93.

161. Sharp and Westmoreland, Report on the War in Vietnam, p. 105.

162. Robert P. Everett, "Hoi Chanh," Airman, Dec 69, p. 9.

163. McGuire, "Psychological Limits," p. 112.

164. Hist, 2d AD, Jan-Jun 65, 1980; Leon Goure and

C. A. H. Thomson, *Some Impressions of Viet Cong Vulnerabilities: An Interim Report* (RM-4699-ISA, Santa Monica, 1965), p. 39; Peterson and Rhinehart, *Role of Airpower in Counterinsurgency Warfare*, p. 10.

165. John C. Donnell, Guy J. Pauker, and Joseph J. Zasloff, *Viet Cong Motivation and Morale: A Preliminary Report* (RM-4507-ISA, Santa Monica, 1965), pp. 41-45, 71; Goure, *Some Findings of the Viet Cong Motivation and Morale Study*, pp. 3-4, 31.

166. Goure, *Some Impressions of Viet Cong Vulnerabilities*, pp 33-40.

167. *Ibid.*, pp. 14-10; Coure, *Some Findings of the Viet Cong Motivation and Morale Study*, pp. 9-10; James Farmer, Counter-insurgency: Viet-Nam, 1962-1963, (P-2778, Santa Monica, 1964), p 25.

168. Leaflet dispensing in the U-10s had to be done by hand. The C-47s had a special chute installed in the rear floor of the cargo compartment which extended into the airstream. Smith, *Psychological Operations by USAF/VNAF*, p. 19, Goure, *Some Impressions of Viet Cong Vulnerabilities*, p. 34.

169. Sams, *Civic Action Role of Air Power*, p. 10.

170. This figure was supported by the military Assistance Command which put the number at more than 27,000 to the end of 1965, Smith, *Psychological Operations by USAF/VNAF*, p. 10; Goure, *Some Impressions of Viet Cong Vulnerabilities*, p. 40.

171. Sams, *Civic Action Role of Air Power*, pp. 10-11.

172. McGuire, "Psychological Limits" pp. 112-13.

173. Goure, *Some Impressions of Viet Cong Vulnerabilities*, p. 18.

174. Hickey, *The American Militia Advisor and His Foreign Counterpart*, pp. 18-19, 34.

175. Goure, *Some of Viet Cong Vulnerabilities*, p. 79.

176. *Ibid.*, p. 18; John Stirling, "Viet-Nam Becomes, Lab for Warfare of Today" *Washington Post*, Jun 7, 1963.

177. Hickey, *The American Military Advisor and His Foreign Counterpart*, pp. 22-30.

CHAPTER IV

REVIVING PACIFICATION AND CIVIC ACTION STRATEGIES

The scope and urgency of our combat operations in Southeast Asia tend to overshadow another phase of our military effort which is of growing significance, especially with respect to its long-range implications. I am referring to the civic action programs carried on by our Armed Forces. Throughout South Vietnam these programs, coupled with our far-ranging economic and educational assistance projects, serve to help offset the destruction and suffering caused by the war and to create the foundation for speedy postwar recovery. Although not widely publicized, these programs and projects are showing most gratifying results.

John P. McConnell¹

By the beginning of 1966 there were signs that the situation in South Vietnam had much improved. A communist victory no longer seemed possible, as it had a year before; and Gen. Westmoreland was predicting a downward turn in the main force war. With the assumption of national power by Maj. Gen. Nguyen Van Thieu as the chief of state and Air Marshall Nguyen Cao Ky as prime minister, the country had become more stabilized politically as well. It was in this more relaxed and positive climate that the United States turned its attention once again to winning the loyalties of the South Vietnamese rural population.²

Despite the initially promising prospects for the 1964 Khanh program, pacification had been all but forgotten in the tumultuous year and a half following Diem's assassination. South Vietnamese pacification efforts were reduced to defensive attempts to maintain some limited control over the more productive portions of the rural countryside, while all other areas were allowed to slip completely under Viet Cong domination. The United States, preoccupied with the rapidly deteriorating military situation and activities resulting from its decision to bomb North Vietnam and to support the war effort directly with American combat forces, found itself with little time to worry about Saigon's impotence in rural areas. American support was consequently more and more relegated to providing funds and material assistance to the central government in Saigon, resulting in less and less aid reaching the countryside. By mid-1964, government influence over the rural population had already dropped seven percent from the previous year.³ At the beginning of 1966, government control extended to only fifty-two percent of the population.⁴ Civilian and military decision-makers alike began to warn that unless the question of peasant loyalties could be resolved in favor of the legitimate government in South Vietnam, the war would be lost even if all the military engagements with the Viet Cong were won. The major question which now confused the administration became how "to win people to win the war," as one American news correspondent phrased it.⁵ This called for a change of strategy. While America would continue to place most of its support behind military solutions to Vietnamese problems, between 1966 and 1968 it gradually modified its program to include more and more civil actions. As in the past, these

were undertaken in support of Vietnamese pacification efforts, which came to be described by various terms—the most popular of which were "rural construction" and "revolutionary development."⁶

The impetus for this strategy change can be traced to various sources. For one thing, the validity of the pacification effort had never been seriously questioned, though at many times it had received little thought and even fewer resources.⁷ The rapid United States troop buildup had been justified at least in part by the fact that it would buy time to allow the South Vietnamese government to stabilize and establish its legitimacy throughout the country.⁸ And so even while American troops poured into the country, the pacification idea continued to receive considerable verbal support. In July 1965, for example, Senator Robert F. Kennedy spoke the mind of many American politicians when he stated that the U.S. approach to revolutionary wars such as the one in Vietnam "must be political—political first, political last, political always."⁹ Moreover, the Marine Corps—to an extent unequalled by the other military services—staunchly supported a pacification strategy over the strictly military approach of "search and destroy" being advocated by the Army during much of this period. During 1965 the III Marine Amphibious Force experimented with its essentially self-developed strategy of civic action and pacification around Da Nang Air Base. According to General Victor H. Krulak, the Commanding General of the Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, pacification was "a cardinal counterinsurgency principle," and such operations in the 676 square mile area assigned to the III Marine Amphibious Force had made the zone "more stable, more prosperous, and far more hopeful."¹⁰ In addition, civilian aid organizations had already become fairly well established in the country by this time, with firm commitments to carry out their nation-building programs. Moreover, Ambassador Lodge, during his first tour in Vietnam, consistently propagandized the importance of governmental social responsibility to the defeat of the Viet Cong.¹¹

Thus, in the fall of 1964 when Saigon itself seemed especially vulnerable to Viet Cong attack, for example, the solution Lodge advocated was an intensive pacification theme called Hop Tac, centered in the provinces around Saigon. During the following year, the program received high priority emphasis from both Ambassador Taylor and General Westmoreland. But it was so poorly planned and executed it had little chance for success. From the Vietnamese perspective it was clearly an American program. Consequently, it fared very poorly in attracting meaningful South Vietnamese support.¹²

Again in the summer of 1965 just after Ky became South Vietnamese premier, another new pacification plan was instituted with financial assistance and personnel support from the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency. This scheme called for organizing and training People's Action Teams to work directly with the people in their own villages and in cooperation with local political authorities. Team members were expected to teach and assist the villagers on improvement projects, help them utilize the resources available through the numerous, but often bureaucratically-run assistance programs in the country, and offer protection against Viet Cong terrorists.¹³ There is evidence that through such activities these civic groups produced appreciable results in numerous villages.¹⁴ Few statistics are available on the number of teams actually employed. One estimate put the number of cadre involved at about 14,500 by the end of 1965.¹⁵ The real significance of the teams, however, lay in the fact that during 1965 the South Vietnamese themselves sponsored an activity aimed at

securing villages and hamlets, The teams thereby provided a foundation on which to construct an expanded pacification program in the future.

The incident which probably did more than anything else to bring these diverse threads together into an integrated push for a new pacification strategy, however, was the reappointment of Henry Cabot Lodge as ambassador in August of 1965.¹⁶ Lodge took Edward Lansdale along as head of a newly created U.S. Mission Liaison Group to work with the Vietnamese government and, in Lodge's words, "get pacification going."¹⁷ Lansdale's very presence, the compilers of the *Pentagon Papers* have noted, gave "an implicit boost to pacification."¹⁸ This "boost" came about partly from the fact that Lansdale's return was well-publicized and accompanied by much fanfare.¹⁹ But also, working together, these two men made enough noise to attract Washington's attention and change its mood considerably. Lodge, through an incessant series of telegrams, memoranda, and cables, kept the idea of pacification, as "the heart of the matter," continually before decision-makers in Washington. And Lansdale's ideas formed the core of the messages.²⁰

Influenced by these developments in Vietnam and eager also to have a visible counter to the increasingly loud clamor from the American press and public over the bombings in North Vietnam and the troop build-up in the South, President Johnson added his voice to those already calling for more emphasis on nation-building and non-combat programs—on the "other war" as it was now being called.²¹ In his February 1 message to Congress on the Foreign Assistance Act of 1966, Johnson stated:

This new act will provide...greater emphasis on civic action programs. We shall give new stress to civic action programs through which local troops build schools and roads, and provide literacy training and health services. Through these programs, military personnel are able to play a more constructive role in their society, and to establish better relations with the civilian populace.²²

This statement had been preceded five months earlier by a major amendment to the 1962 Foreign Assistance Act. Under the 1962 legislation, use of military assistance funds for civic projects was strictly limited to internal security, self-defense fortifications, participation in regional or collective defense arrangements, and participation in United Nations peacekeeping missions. Passage of the 1965 amendment highlighted the increased awareness by top government leaders of the value of civic action. The amendment itself lifted many of the funding restrictions on its use and recognized civic action as a normal military activity.²³

A few days after forwarding his 1966 foreign aid request to Congress, the President and his key advisors flew to Honolulu for a major bilateral conference with President Thieu, Prime Minister Ky, and their principal aides.²⁴ Even before the conference began, the press was briefed that the results of the meeting would be an upgrading of the entire pacification effort. During the opening session at Pacific Air Forces headquarters on February 7, President Johnson briefly touched on the need to increase military pressure on the Viet Cong. He then turned to the non-military side of the war, soliciting the conferees' suggestions on how to bring better programs to the people of South Vietnam.²⁵ General Nguyen Duc Thang, the Vietnamese Secretary of State for Rural Construction, responded with his government's pacification plan—a four-point program to be implemented by creating a feeling of real solidarity between

the people, the armed forces, and the administration. Specifically, he stated the goal called for pursuing pacification activities in 963 new hamlets and 1,083 existing hamlets, while building 2,251 classrooms, 913 km of roads, 128 bridges, 57 dams, and 119 km of canals. Gen. Thang said the Saigon government's pacification efforts would emphasize development of handicraft industries, rural electrification, land reform, and development of school programs.²⁶ All these programs had been at the core of almost all Vietnamese social reform efforts from the beginning. Nevertheless, the South Vietnamese proposal was hailed as an innovative new commitment to solving Vietnamese political problems. If the Americans recognized that little attention was addressed to the crucial issues pacification had encountered in the past, very little at least was said publicly.

The real significance of the Honolulu meeting, then, was not the programs it proposed but the fact that it successfully focused public attention on the need for a non-military strategy in South Vietnam. Before the conference had ended, a United States president for the first time had extended his full support to a political, counter-insurrectional solution to the problems confronting Vietnam. The enthusiasm with which President Johnson and members of the U.S. delegation embraced the pacification strategy indicated that they viewed this as the possible final step. "We don't want to talk about it," the President said. "We want to do something about it"-to be able to display "coonskins on the wall."²⁷ The conference closed on February 9 with the two countries issuing a joint communiqué called the Declaration of Honolulu. This public statement reaffirmed South Vietnamese and American support for a "social revolution" and pledged an all-out effort to support the civil side of the war. The Vietnamese war, the Declaration read, "is a military war," but it is also:

a war for the hearts of our people. We cannot win one without winning the other. But the war for the hearts of the people is more than a military tactic. It is a moral principle. For this we shall strive as we fight to bring about a true social revolution. Just as the United States is pledged to play its full part in the worldwide attack upon hunger, ignorance, and disease, so in Vietnam it will give special support to the work of the people of that country to build even while they fight. We have helped and we will help them—to stabilize the economy—to increase the production of food—to spread the light of education—to stamp out disease.²⁸

To assure implementation of these ideas, the two national leaders planned a follow-up conference four to six months later. Once he had arrived back in the United States, President Johnson committed all agencies of the government, including the military, to participate actively in such activities and to encourage the Vietnamese in their rural development efforts.²⁹ Three days after the Hawaii meeting, the President reorganized the U.S. Mission in Saigon in accordance with his new non-military commitments. To underline their importance, Deputy Ambassador in Saigon, William J. Porter, was assigned as full-time overseer for the pacification drive. Porter was considered by many to be one of the most capable Americans in Vietnam.³⁰ The next month Robert W. Komer of the National Security Council staff was named President Johnson's special assistant to coordinate and supervise the non-military aspects of the war from Washington. Komer's enthusiasm for the pacification effort and the energy

he exerted to widen its acceptance led Ambassador Lodge to nickname him the "Blowtorch."³¹

It was not very long before this high-level direction was felt by American military units—including the Air Force—in Vietnam.³² Up to the summer of 1966, Seventh Air Force civic actions had been pursued on a piecemeal basis, with no central coordination. Usually, they were handled at unit level as an additional duty or took the form of unofficial action during off-duty time. The twenty-four Air Force chaplains then serving in Vietnam occasionally sponsored projects, providing some coordination. But even then, there were few guidelines to follow and little money to spend. Most activities tended to be humanitarian in nature, with little thought as to their impact on the overall course of the war. In almost all cases, no official records were kept.³³ In late 1965, in an effort to bring some central direction to Air Force civic actions, the Seventh Air Force command chaplain attempted to compile a one-year, countrywide summary of Air Force activities in Vietnam. He requested that each base appoint a project officer and that status reports be submitted to Seventh Air Force headquarters. The irregular response necessitated two follow-up letters. When a summary of that year's activities was finally written, the haphazard nature of the program showed up in the fragmented documentation available.³⁴

It was against this background of, first, a renewed emphasis on rural development and pacification, and second, Seventh Air Force realization that it needed a better organized, more professional program that the Air Force began establishing a formal organization for its civic activities.³⁵ Delineation of a Seventh Air Force program was begun during the spring and summer of 1966. On April 30, the Military Assistance Command in Vietnam published Directive 515-2. This new guideline incorporated previous civic action directives and outlined the responsibilities for the development, coordination, and implementation of civic action programs. In addition, it laid out additional policies for all subordinate commands and advisory detachments. The U.S. Air Force was clearly included:

Component commanders are responsible for the development, execution, and support of military civic action programs by subordinate units in accordance with policies established by COMUSMACV (Commander, U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam).³⁶

The next month the Air Force Advisory Group assigned to the Military Assistance Command headquarters was designated the office of primary responsibility for Air Force civic activities in recognition of the need to work closely with and through the Vietnamese Air Force in improving the image of the Vietnamese government. Thus the Air Force program was initiated under the direction of the U.S. Military Assistance Command and had to comply with command directives.³⁷ The Pacific Air Forces also became involved with funding and manning the program. Later, after the program was better established, the Pacific Command also began providing broad policy guidance for base programs throughout Southeast Asia, setting program objectives and priorities, and securing adequate transportation for Air Force civic action personnel.³⁸ Details of the Air Force program, however, were worked out by the Seventh Air Force itself.

During the next few months, Seventh Air Force leaders were made more aware of the interest with which President Johnson, his Secretary of Defense, and other

officials at the highest levels of the government viewed the potential of a constructive military civic action program. On June 8, for example, a joint message from the Departments of State and Defense, and the Agency for International Development was dispatched to the unified commanders and American diplomatic leaders of a number of insurgency-prone countries requiring new emphasis on the planning and execution of civic action programs and requesting that civic action projects be considered in the five-year Military Assistance Program planning process by embassies and unified commands. Special emphasis was placed on the necessity for encouraging the host country military forces to undertake their own self-help programs with a minimum of U.S. support.³⁹ Three days later, another joint message was sent specifically to the Commander in Chief of the Pacific requesting:

all necessary country team emphasis on all measures required to dramatize to the RVNAF [Armed Forces of the Republic of Vietnam] from top to bottom the importance of improved military civilian relations through proper attitudes and actions.... Worldwide emphasis projected by the President to meet US security and development requirements, provides an auspicious occasion to stimulate renewed RVNAF emphasis on civic actions, largely in establishing better relations with the civilian population.⁴⁰

Air Force Chief of Staff John P. McConnell also kept up the pressure on Air Force leaders in this regard. In mid-July, for example, he wired the Commander in Chief of the Pacific Air Forces about the growing importance of the pacification program. After acknowledging the different mission and operations of air power compared to the other military services, he nonetheless stressed the "tremendous potential for civic action and assistance" which the U.S. Air Force and indigenous air forces possess. He stated it was important to re-emphasize "at all levels of command the importance of this mission." "Second to combat operations," he noted, our efforts in this area are the most valuable contribution we can make to the defeat of communist insurgency, the establishment of solid and progressive governments, and lasting peace in Southeast Asia.⁴¹

General McConnell then elaborated on this by suggesting the establishment of a "civic actions assistance council" as an Air Force-wide coordinating agency to provide a forum for advising and assisting air commanders in setting up their individual programs. He also outlined a number of objectives which such programs would be designed to accomplish. Among them he included the development of indigenous military civic action programs to meet the needs of local people. This objective supported the original Joint Chiefs of Staff definition which held that effective civic action had to be largely the product of local initiative. But the Chief of Staff went on to expand the definition of Air Force civic action. His list of objectives also included the employing of U.S. Air Force assets for spontaneous humanitarian activities, improving local intelligence collection, and promoting local understanding and acceptance of a U.S. Air Force presence in the foreign country.⁴²

Sensing, therefore, the importance being attached to civic action in Washington, the Seventh Air Force Commander, General William W. Momyer, told his staff that, "limited only by our combat mission," the capabilities and energies of the U.S. Air Force would be used "to implement a positive Civic Action Program at

each United States air base in South Vietnam." He also specified that each base program be integrated with the Headquarters Seventh Air Force civic action program, which would in turn be designed to further South Vietnamese revolutionary development goals. He recommended that a civic action council be established at Seventh Air Force headquarters and at each base to advise the commander on all aspects of civic action. Accelerated manning, he reported, had been requested by Pacific Air Forces to provide a full-time civic action officer at Seventh Air Force headquarters as well as one at each major air base in the country. In addition, funds were to be provided each commander to finance worthwhile projects for which resources were otherwise unavailable.⁴³ Even before receiving this direction, however, the Seventh Air Force had started making preparations for a comprehensive new civic action program. Each base was instructed to prepare its own civic action plan, and the command headquarters published and distributed a notebook to assist commanders with its implementation. The Seventh Air Force also made plans to publish a monthly *Civic Action Newsletter* for dissemination to each commander. The compilation permitted a cross flow of information between the bases and provided a means of distributing information received in the Saigon office from other civic action offices and agencies.⁴⁴ The first issue was published and distributed at the end of 1966.⁴⁵

Funding arrangements for a more intensive Air Force civic action effort were also being worked out by the time General Momyer began his promotional efforts. In April, the Military Assistance Command Chaplains Fund (which had been-formed as a depository for donations received from the United States and not designated for specific projects) was expanded to include a special civic action account—the Military Assistance Command civic action fund. U.S. units and advisors could request money from this special account for small projects within their areas of responsibility.⁴⁶ Each base also maintained a small civic action-psychological warfare fund for local purchases in piasters. Civic action projects, however, were usually most needed in remote areas, far removed from established supply lines and hardcore bases. Additionally, many situations required an immediate civic action response that would not be possible if materials were requested through normal supply channels. Before the middle of 1966 no large fund existed within the U.S. Air Force for its units to use for local purchase of items needed to undertake such projects. Many Special Air Warfare units resorted to personal contributions from assigned personnel to satisfy the need.⁴⁷

A special investigation by the Pacific Air Forces Command suggested that Air Force units should be provided with a small fund for use on civic action projects of an immediate nature.⁴⁸ Partially as a result of this inquiry and recommendation, the Military Assistance Command set up an innovative "revolving cash fund" under its control to finance "high impact civic action projects" that required rapid accomplishment and for which other funds were not available. A directive issued by the Military Assistance Command on June 15, 1966, outlined procedures whereby United States and free world military units in Vietnam could utilize these resources.⁴⁹ In September, the 377th Combat Support Group at Tan Son Nhut received the largest initial grant, 200,000 piasters. Bien Hoa, Cam Ranh Bay, Phan Rang, Da Nang, and Nha Trang each received 100,000 piasters.⁵⁰ A separate Seventh Air Force civic action fund was identified to finance civic action projects for smaller bases such as Pleiku and Binh Thuy, and tenant units such as the 505th Tactical Control Group which were too small to qualify for their own funds, Tuy Hoa and Phu Cat were each

promised 100,000 piasters when they became operational. Each base's imprest fund cashier was authorized to replenish the fund periodically from cash received from the Military Assistance Command's aid in kind custodian. This new revolving fund was designed only as a small supplement to existing funds. It could not be used in lieu of money traditionally acquired from the U.S. Operations Mission or the Agency for International Development.⁵¹ It also could not be used when normal Vietnamese government financing was available.⁵² Disbursements were limited to projects in the areas of education, public works, agriculture, health, and sanitation. The Command imposed a force-wide 30 million piaster limitation for the remainder of 1966.⁵³ The first Air Force project for which these civic action funds were actually requested involved the repair and rebuilding of a road connecting the hamlet of Trang Sup with the provincial capital of Tay Ninh. The road was needed for both military and civilian purposes. Its repair illustrated how the civic action program tried to choose projects useful to both sectors. The project was undertaken jointly by the Agency for International Development and the U.S. Army's special forces, which together were able to provide 50,000 piasters out of the total cost of 75,000 piasters. The Agency for International Development requested the Air Force unit in Tay Ninh Province—the 617th Tactical Control Squadron—to finance the remaining 25,000 piasters. Seventh Air Force headquarters approved this expenditure, and the money was transferred to the squadron from the Seventh Air Force civic action fund.⁵⁴

Late in 1966, Air Force personnel concerned with the civic action program attempted to set up a separate chaplain's fund for each base in South Vietnam to manage cash donations received from private sources in the United States and Vietnam. When this effort was disapproved, a separate fund was established called the "civic welfare fund."⁵⁵ This decentralization in the management of donations allowed better control over their use. Each base's fund committee, for example, could now assure that all donations specified for an express purpose by the donors would be used for that purpose.⁵⁶

In addition to the resources available on each base for civic action projects, Seventh Air Force personnel had access to the vast quantities of supplies available through the U.S. Agency for International Development. This U.S. government organization had warehouses in almost every province in South Vietnam. While it provided some foodstuffs, it was the primary supplier of construction materials such as lumber, roofing, and cement needed for many civic action projects. These resources could be requested for almost all efforts designed to help the local populace, except for those projects oriented to help only Vietnamese armed forces personnel or their dependents.⁵⁷

Supplies collected by numerous international voluntary agencies were also available for use by the Air Force for humanitarian relief to the South Vietnamese people.⁵⁸ Many of these organizations preferred to work through U.S. advisory and military civic action personnel to accomplish their objectives. During the first five months of 1966, U.S. military men distributed 12,860 tons of food, clothing, and medical items provided by the Catholic Relief Services and about \$759,800 worth of CARE commodities. CARE also furnished several different kinds of self-help kits used in setting up small-scale industries such as blacksmith and woodwork shops, and for teaching midwifery and sewing. Many civic action projects were planned around donations from these private voluntary agencies. Military-built dispensaries, for instance, were stocked with medical supplies and refugee centers supplied with

foodstuffs from the large stocks of these items provided by Catholic Relief Services. An interesting aspect of the CARE program was that a donor in the United States or Canada could specify the type of work he wanted accomplished and give the name of an American military person as the distributor. The large number of CARE offices in South Vietnam furnished the information which greatly simplified the donator's problems of what to donate, and the agency's vast transportation network assured that the contribution reached its destination. Thus the resources provided by these independent agencies made it possible for civic action personnel to expand their outreach capabilities enormously.⁵⁹

Another significant achievement during this same time period was the delineation of a formal civic action reporting system.⁶⁰ On previously performed projects no reports had been required. Records were kept on some projects, but most were completed without any documentation whatsoever.⁶¹ Under such circumstances, follow-up programs and coordination with other units and services proved very difficult.

During 1966, however, major steps were taken to correct this oversight, and a formal arrangement for reporting Air Force civic activities was worked out.⁶² At the base level, one report on such actions was sent to Seventh Air Force headquarters on a monthly basis. The report, in narrative form, basically told who did what, where, when, to what extent, and to how many. The Seventh Air Force Command, in turn, submitted several reports. A statistical report was due to the Military Assistance Command in Vietnam every month, Seventh Air Force also filed a quarterly account to the commander in chief of the Pacific Air Forces, and a special report to Air Force headquarters twice a year.⁶³ In February, 1966, all major overseas commands were directed to prepare quarterly summaries of both U.S. Air Force and indigenous air force civic actions. The Special Warfare Division, which had originally held at least nominal responsibility for such non-combat matters, was designated to accept and process these summaries for the Air Force Directorate of Plans.

The result was a compilation entitled USAF Civic Action Report. The Directorate of Plans distributed over two hundred copies of the first issue to the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, unified and specified commands, major air commands, defense attaches, military advisory groups and missions, as well as other Air Staff and Defense Department agencies.⁶⁴ The publicity which such reports gave to Air Force activities was considered a vital function which would not only stimulate further interest and activity within the Air Force but also win more cooperation and respect from other U.S. military services.⁶⁵ The Office of the Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs later endorsed the utility of these reports by requesting additional copies, which were then forwarded to other offices, including the State Department and the U.S. Information Agency.⁶⁶ The Foreign Service Institute and the Joint Staff also requested more copies. Because of the interest generated by the initial January through March 1966 report, future plans called for an even wider distribution outside the Air Force.⁶⁷

While the Air Force was formalizing a civic action reporting system, it also stepped-up its efforts to procure and produce more adequate training materials for Air Force personnel engaged in civic action. In March 1966, Tactical Air Command headquarters directed the Special Air Warfare Center to undertake a study to define the psychological operations and civic action role of special air warfare, specify training requirements, outline a training program, and determine qualification

requirements for trainees. The study was undertaken during 1966 and part of 1967 in conjunction with Data Dynamics, Incorporated, and research teams conducted investigations in Latin America, Europe, and Southeast Asia. By the fall of 1967 the Air Warfare Center had formulated a new training program which was expected to improve Air Force participation in civic action.⁶⁸ Because a well-run civic program would entail considerable interface with foreign personnel, the Directorate of Armed Forces Information and Education in the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense was also asked to prepare basic instructional material which could be used by military personnel assigned to several different countries. Among other things, such material would help Americans understand U.S. national objectives, the principles of democracy applicable to foreign areas, and simple techniques to aid communication with people of other cultures.⁶⁹

More progress was made implementing the Air Force program in May 1966 when the Political Warfare Directorate of the Air Force Advisory Group in Vietnam became the office of primary responsibility. From its central position, this directorate could coordinate the entire Seventh Air Force program.⁷⁰ An Air Force regulation issued the next month assigned the political warfare advisor for each of the group's Air Force Advisory Teams as the area-wide "civil action coordinator" for his respective base. At bases where there was no Air Force Advisory Team, the base commander was instructed to appoint a special civic action officer.⁷¹

Performing an advisory function to the Vietnamese Air Force and serving as civic action coordinator in an additional duty capacity, however, proved to be too burdensome for the Political Warfare Directorate's limited manpower resources.⁷² Before the end of July, the Seventh Air Force had started action to create a separate staff office for civic action and to assign civic action officers to all combat support groups. By August, it had organized a U.S., Air Force Civic Action Coordinating Group within its headquarters at Tan Son Nhut Air Base. It also established a Civic Action Division within its Directorate of Plans to provide country-wide policy guidance. One officer was initially assigned to the headquarters office and the transfer of responsibilities from the Political Warfare Directorate began.⁷³ The transfer was completed in September. The new Division now became the office of primary responsibility, and the one officer was joined by an enlisted man.⁷⁴

These were still interim arrangements. On October 6, in line with Momyer's earlier suggestion, the Seventh Air Force published a regulation calling for the establishment of civic action councils within the headquarters and at the various air bases in South Vietnam.⁷⁵ The headquarters Civic Action Council would be responsible for development of the country-wide Seventh Air Force program. Base level councils would assist and advise the commander on each unit-level program. The base civic action officer would serve as planner, organizer, administrator, and troubleshooter for the commander. He would also act as a liaison among revolutionary development representatives, local officials, armed forces personnel, and village or hamlet residents. The Civic Action Division would monitor the entire Seventh Air Force program, insuring that all problems were brought before the headquarters council for resolution.⁷⁶

Even with this detailed arrangement for a division of responsibilities, it was nonetheless recognized that the success of the program would depend upon an across the board staff effort, with the results a direct function of the emphasis placed on the program by the Seventh Air Force commanders at the unit level.⁷⁷ consequently, on

October 8. The first regulation was followed by a second defining the responsibilities of each commander and outlining the objectives, initiation, and reporting procedures to govern the new program.⁷⁸

To insure that responsibility for civic projects would not be conveniently pushed off to the few designated civic action people at each base, it was emphasized, from the infancy of the program, that each staff agency had a major role in the development and implementation of each civic action project as well as the program as a whole. For this reason, at all bases except Da Nang, the civic action mission was assigned directly to the staff of the combat support group which contained most of the organizations needed for a project's successful completion.⁷⁹ The directorate of materiel, for example, would supply materials and transportation for construction projects. The surgeon would coordinate medical programs. And the directorate of information, working with the 600th Photo Squadron would chronicle all accomplishments and publicize U.S. and Vietnamese civic efforts on a local and worldwide scale.⁸⁰

With lines of authority established and responsibilities thus assigned, the first Civic Action Council met on November 10, 1966. The meeting was chaired by the Seventh Air Force Chief of Staff, Brig. Gen. Franklin A. Nichols. It would meet thereafter on a monthly basis, bringing considerable coordination to the program and resolving many problems which baffled officers and councils at lower levels.⁸¹

Later that month the Seventh Air Force command also created a quarterly civic action award to encourage better performance through competition among the different South Vietnamese air bases.⁸² Pleiku won the first awards for the last quarter of 1966 and the first quarter of 1967.

Other bases later received recognition for similar outstanding performances.⁸³ Thus substantial progress had been made during 1966 in implementing the Air Force civic action program in South Vietnam. In summing up the various actions undertaken, one project officer concluded that:

The foundation of a new 7AF Civic Action Program is now established. In the ensuing months we should see the results of the new guidance as the base programs are planned and specific projects are initiated. The pacing item in our Civic Action Program will be the stimulation and persuasion of the VNAF to take a more active role as our joint program expands. A minor hurdle is presented by the delay in Civic Action manning because the true potential of the 7AF Civic Action Program will not be realized until the requested spaces are manned.⁸⁴

Shortly after this assessment was made, the Joint Chiefs of Staff approved spaces for thirteen officers and an equal number of enlisted personnel to man the civic action offices erected at the various bases. By the end of 1966, Pacific Air Forces had assigned an additional officer and enlisted man to Seventh Air Force headquarters and one each at Da Nang, Nha Trang Bien Hoa, and Tan Son Nhut. The officers were drawn from an in-country overage of administrative officials.⁸⁵ The other bases were authorized an additional-duty base civic action officer.⁸⁶ In April 1967 these bases were also authorized a full-time officer. By mid-1967, Manning was essentially complete, with personnel filling nineteen of the total of twenty-four spaces available throughout the country.⁸⁷ These officers were assisted in their work by Vietnamese interpreter-translators, known as civic action liaison officers, which the Vietnamese

government agreed to assign to each base. Six were in place by the end of 1967. The translators—one at each base—proved invaluable in resolving difficulties and facilitating communication with the local population.⁸⁸

The three people assigned to each base civic action office, then, had responsibility for managing and coordinating all base programs. Since it was not possible or desirable that they do all the work themselves, heavy emphasis was placed on the use of volunteers from all units on the base to help carry out the various projects. Normally few problems were encountered securing the necessary help. Enthusiasm on the part of base personnel—officers and airmen alike—was usually tremendous.

As the civic action program developed and expanded, other problems came to light which were not so easily resolved, however. Many would continue to hamper Air Force efforts for the duration of America's presence in South Vietnam and would win a permanent spot on Civic Action Council meeting agendas. Civic action reports from Southeast Asia had identified most of these problem areas by the end of 1966. Realization of their existence helped personnel involved with the program clarify their objectives and move the program forward.

One continuing problem which was identified quite early was the lack of adequate transportation for both civic action personnel and the supplies and equipment they needed to carry out their work.⁸⁹ The Agency for International Development was able to airlift some 1500 tons of civic action commodities each month, but between 1,000 and 1,500 additional tons needing transportation had to rely on the common-user transportation system. These materials were airlifted from Tan Son Nhut in accordance with priorities established by the Military Assistance Command. Because the priorities were designated in relation to combat support materials, commodities for rebuilding South Vietnam received a very low rating. The heavy volume of operational materials requiring transport and the frequent tactical emergency shipments which took precedence over everything else, usually meant endless delays for non-combat related goods and much frustration on the part of civic action personnel. Many commodities were lost due to spoilage and weathering, and some very important high impact civic action projects had to be deferred indefinitely because of the lack of timely material support.⁹⁰

As an illustration, between August and September 1966, the Seventh Air Force was made responsible for distributing over ninety pallets of food, clothing, and toys collected in the United States by the Young Republicans, the Young Democrats, and the Junior Chamber of Commerce. Non-availability of regular air transportation forced the units involved to turn to surface transportation. But here too the men were confronted by a different set of problems caused by severely damaged and insecurely-held highways. Personnel at Tan Son Nhut and Bien Hoa, nonetheless, did manage to move fifty-two pallets by truck. The airmen at Binh Thuy, however, were forced to use helicopters. Twenty-two pallets (some 26,500 pounds) remained undistributed for a month before a special airlift could be arranged.⁹¹ Early in 1967, at the request of the Civic Action Council, the Seventh Air Force commander authorized the use of base support aircraft for delivering civic action materials. This proved to be a workable solution in most cases.⁹² A query into the possibility of using Air America in a backup airlift capacity in support of the civic action program, however, revealed that this could be done only by private contract, making the costs prohibitive.⁹³

Civic action teams faced a similar transportation problem which tremendously

hampered their productivity.⁹⁴ It was partially resolved in March 1967 when the Pacific Air Forces commander approved a Seventh Air Force request to assign a motor vehicle to each base civic action officer from available resources.⁹⁵

Another significant lesson the Seventh Air Force learned about civic action during the program's first year of operation concerned the necessity for downgrading highly visible American-run programs and encouraging self help cooperation between the citizenry and the government.

If revolutionary development was to succeed in identifying the people with South Vietnamese authorities, then Americans had to stay in the background. Evidence also began to accumulate showing that projects completed by the people themselves could achieve more lasting results than those completed entirely by military personnel.⁹⁶

If a village needed a well, for example, it might prove counterproductive in the long run for an experienced American drilling crew, using American equipment, to perform the work and follow it with an American dedicatory ceremony. Since the villagers were not expected to contribute to the project, they would consequently feel little sense of pride and ownership. And experience showed that they would probably not protect it from Viet Cong sabotage. The better approach, on the other hand, would be for the U.S. Air Force, working through Vietnamese Air Force personnel informally to identify the hamlet's needs which it could help meet and then to encourage the hamlet and village chiefs to petition the district chief for help. Usually an officer in the South Vietnamese Army, the district chief represented the national government. Air Force aid could be provided quietly to these governmental representatives who would then be seen as the public benefactors to the hamlet, rather than the United States government. Such a procedure would bring the hamlet and village chiefs in contact with the district (and hence the national) government encourage the Vietnamese in the habit of going to their own government for help, and give the national government the credit for public improvements.⁹⁷

This pattern of operation did not work in all cases and was in fact the exception rather than the rule during much of 1966 and 1967. Recognition of its superiority over purely American-centered programs, however, held out promise for future activities in Vietnam and the rest of Southeast Asia and served as a goal toward which program directors could strive. The April through June 1967 civic action report to Pacific Air Forces put the concept cogently:

Several bases have formed Civic Action Technical Assistance Teams to furnish advice, guidance and training to local hamlets on civic action projects. Under this concept, a project is surveyed by the professionally competent team members. Requirements and standards are established and technical guidance is given. The actual construction is done by the Vietnamese, resulting in closer identification by them with the project. It is anticipated that this concept will be adopted by all bases.⁹⁸

Realization of this goal, however, hinged on South Vietnamese interest and participation. Hence, significant headway would have to await a more enthusiastic response than that displayed in 1966.⁹⁹

Besides poor transportation arrangements and an inadequate Vietnamese response, other obstacles hampered the civic action program's effectiveness as well

during its developmental phase. Even with the enormous strides made to provide funds for the program, shortages were a constant problem with which base personnel had to contend.

Many times civic projects were placed in direct competition for funds with the strictly military demands of the war. And when this happened, the civic action program was the one usually thought to possess the less immediate need. One observer had taken note of this tendency to slight smaller programs as early as 1961. His remarks remained just as applicable half a decade later:

sophisticated weapons systems continue to absorb the major portion of available funds leaving little to carry on or initiate the many small, mundane projects that constitute a desirable effort in remote area limited war. It is much easier to "sell" and keep alive a larger sophisticated, technically exciting project than a series of small projects—it is easier to herd an elephant than a thousand rabbits. A hungry elephant is also more conspicuous and more noisy than a herd of rabbits.¹⁰⁰

One last lesson which was learned quite early was that more benefits resulted from developing well-planned, time-phased civic action programs, rather than engaging in spur-of-the-moment projects on a spare-time basis as the Air Force had been involved with in the past.¹⁰¹ As the civic action program continued to expand administratively, with increased manning and closer integration with the base defense and psychological operations programs, specific projects naturally became better planned and coordinated.¹⁰² Moreover, by April 1967 most air bases in South Vietnam had developed a formal civic action plan.¹⁰³ Although operating under the direction and control of the Army-dominated Military Assistance Command, the Seventh Air Force program provided enough flexibility to allow each of the ten bases to establish and conduct a separate program tailored to the needs of the particular area in which it was located.

Each base's plan usually consisted of a list of the projects the base civic action council considered worthwhile. Many proposed projects were based on requests for assistance solicited from residents of nearby hamlets. Once formulated, the plan was then submitted to the senior provincial advisor of the U. S. Military Assistance Command and to the local and provincial Vietnamese officials who would be affected. Priorities would then be assigned and positive commitments made. An approved plan permitted advance planning of manpower and material needs and allowed sufficient time to acquire needed assistance through existing channels.¹⁰⁴

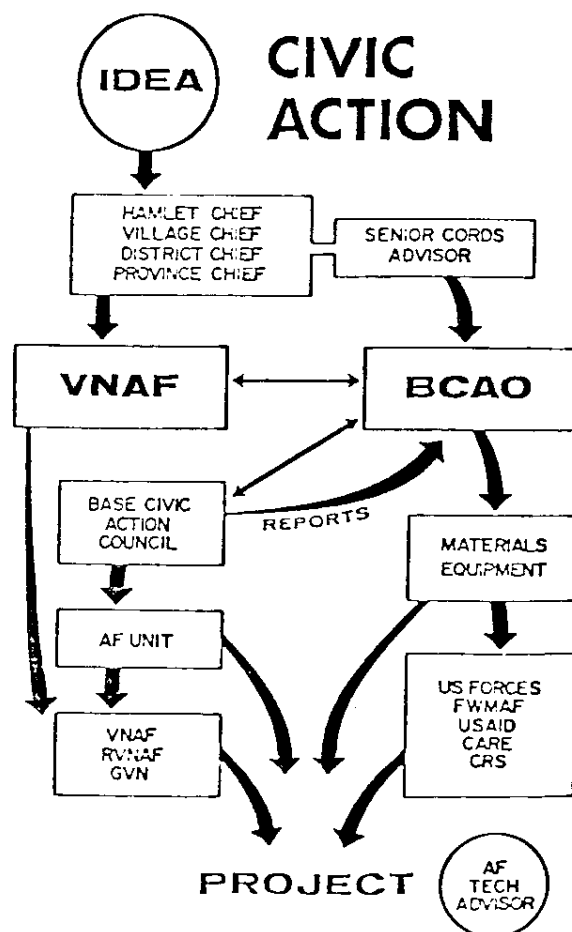
The individual province chief usually served as the principal focal point for integrating the program with provincial needs. As the senior government official, he determined the requirements, established priorities, and allocated Vietnamese resources for military civic action projects. If particular projects required additional guidance or supplies, the provincial or district advisors of the Military Assistance Command were contacted. Supplemental support from either the Vietnamese government or the U.S. Agency for International Development would be arranged. To receive approval and funds, projects had to be relevant to the overall revolutionary development program. Priority was also given to combined projects on which, American and Vietnamese Air Force personnel worked side-by-side.¹⁰⁵ Most of the

plans which were developed involved one or more of five different types of projects, each aimed at either offsetting the destruction and suffering caused by the war, encouraging a sense of national unity among the people, creating a non-hostile environment for base activities, or laying the foundation for a speedy postwar recovery.¹⁰⁶ Four of these undertakings—the emergency relief of suffering project, provincial airlift, aid to needy institutions, and community relations projects—were not new on the list of Air Force civic activities.¹⁰⁷ What was new, however, was the extensive effort initiated to coordinate the various programs in order to provide timely assistance and to avoid either duplication or oversight.¹⁰⁸

On emergency relief projects, for example, early and positive steps had to be taken to relieve suffering so that the Viet Cong would not exploit the situation and win over still another portion of the local populace. Although each situation differed because of the various types of disasters, certain forms of assistance were always needed: distribution of food and clothing, evacuation of people to emergency shelters, medical attention to the injured, and quite often, reparations for personal losses. Advance plans, developed in coordination with other U.S. military forces in the vicinity, the local Agency for International Development representative, and Vietnamese government officials, assured the allocation of emergency resources in the form of personnel, supplies, and transportation and allowed prearranged teams to go immediately to the scene of the disaster to offer assistance to the victims.

Similarly, other civic action projects normally also required material resources for their completion. Airlift on an unscheduled, space-available basis did not guarantee timely support to isolated areas. Consequently, civic activities had previously reached only as far as the available transportation routes. The development of scheduled airlift plans by many air bases, however, made possible a whole variety of different projects—many of them carried on by military services other than the Air Force. This tremendously expanded the role of air power in the South Vietnamese civic action program and moved the government's revolutionary development program into the remote countryside.

The many South Vietnamese institutions needing assistance in one form or another likewise benefited tremendously from well thought-out and coordinated plans. By 1966, various U.S. and Vietnamese governmental and military agencies had compiled lists of most local institutions, containing such useful information as to the amount of aid each was receiving at the time and the assistance still required.



Source: 7th AFP 55-1. 7AF In-Country Tactical Air Ops Handbook, Mar 20, 1968, p 122.

A general review of this data with local provincial committees permitted base civic action personnel to assign specific organizations to each Air Force unit. Each unit, together with representatives of a corresponding Vietnamese Air Force unit, could then visit the designated institutions, survey their specific needs, and draw a plan of action. Coordination with the base civic action council and the local provincial committees followed, allowing assignment of personnel and allocation of resources. The projects which ensued—many of them long-term—produced many more permanent and meaningful benefits than random distributions of candy, food, and toys to any conveniently located institution, even though the momentary effects were often not as emotional.¹⁰⁹

As far as community relations projects were concerned, these too had made up an important part of Air Force civic activities since the arrival of the first Air Force units in Vietnam. Serious planning for such projects, however, did not begin until after the U.S. Military Assistance Command issued a directive in June 1965 setting forth the basic framework for community relations committees and friendship

councils.¹¹⁰ The directive specified that these bodies were to be established in each urban area in South Vietnam and would be composed of principal representatives from each major military unit in the vicinity. The purpose of the committees and councils was to develop a community relations program to enhance mutual respect between the military forces in the country and the Vietnamese civilian population.¹¹¹ Air Force personnel were usually represented on these councils and participated on the resulting projects. In addition, many Air Force commanders initiated their own community relations programs to instruct the personnel under their command in the importance of their role as ambassadors for the United States. This was quite important because the unthinking act of one individual could easily undo the well-planned, thoughtful efforts of an entire base.

Even though most air base civic action plans contained reference to the necessity for good community relations projects and properly coordinated humanitarian activities, it was on civic projects to further air base security that most programs placed their emphasis. Viet Cong attacks on South Vietnamese airfields had begun in earnest in 1966.¹¹² Studies showed that attacking forces enjoyed good intelligence and had cooperation—both willing and coerced—from Vietnamese living in the immediate vicinity of the bases. The Viet Cong, for example, often assembled weapons and ammunition well in advance of the scheduled attacks. And during September of 1966, three detailed maps of Da Nang Air Base were discovered during the search of a local Vietnamese residence. The most detailed of the maps showed all the base's roads, buildings, and grounds. It also contained some forty keyed descriptions of such areas as the Vietnamese Air Force headquarters communication towers, flight line, and the alert crew's quarters.

The threat to major bases such as Da Nang was compounded by the 1966 buildup of troops and equipment. By the end of the year, some in the Military Assistance Command believed Viet Cong successes in attacking airfields constituted the most notable communist victories during the year. All indications were that the level and frequency of this type of attack would increase.¹¹³

Although base defense was technically a South Vietnamese responsibility, the United States was sensitive to the need to protect these airfields and the U.S. personnel and assets assigned to them.¹¹⁴ As part of the base defense program, Air Force planners advocated use of a combination of civic action and psychological warfare to win over the population adjoining the air base, thus cutting into the Viet Cong's popular support and raising the cost for the Viet Cong to implement similar people's programs. The resulting Air Force plan became known as the perimeter hamlet rehabilitation programs Coordinated by the Seventh Air Force, the program emphasized joint United States Vietnamese Air Force projects in the hamlets surrounding Da Nang, Nha Trang, Bien Hoa, Tan Son Nhut, and Binh Thuy, and joint U.S. Air Force-Vietnamese government projects in the vicinity of Pleiku, Phu Cat, Tuy Hoa, Cam Ranh Bay, and Phan Rang. These latter bases did not have a Vietnamese Air Force wing in residence to work jointly with American personnel.¹¹⁵

The perimeter hamlet program actually started in October 1965 when the Gia Dinh sector chief, reacting from a recent Viet Cong attack on Bien Hoa Air Base, decided to step-up the security at Tan Son Nhut, the headquarters for all Air Force activities in Vietnam and the base for about 13,000 Air Force personnel. The base was situated on the outskirts of Saigon in a heavily populated area. Twelve hamlets surrounding the air base fell within the "sensitive area" classification. By all

measurements, the economic status of the more than 50,000 people residing in them was substandard. Many families could have been classified as destitute. In general, the sanitation, health, and living conditions were deplorable. A combination of these factors made the hamlets relatively secure havens for many Viet Cong. A government survey revealed that in some hamlets as many as seventy percent of the inhabitants were either outright Viet Cong sympathizers or members of families containing communist supporters.¹¹⁶

To counter the definite Viet Cong advantage in the Tan Son Nhut area, a civic action program involving the Boy Scout movement (which Air Force personnel had helped to initiate) was undertaken. The Scouts assisted in distributing foodstuffs and other commodities. The people responded well, with very little open hostility. The sector chief then assigned each of the twelve hamlets to a specific Vietnamese Air Force unit of the 33rd Wing located at the base. To meet the needs of hamlet residents, Vietnamese airmen grouped themselves into cultural, sanitation, medical, and construction teams. They also formed hamlet cadres to work directly with the destitute villagers. Food, clothing, and toys were distributed on a regular basis, and the quality of life improved considerably.¹¹⁷

The program was extremely large, however. Although there were sufficient Vietnamese and Seventh Air Force personnel to match the requirements, too often the program suffered from lack of direction. Frequently the Seventh Air Force unit would take the easier, short-term approach and spend the day at one of the local orphanages passing out candy and toys. On a comparative scale, the results of such civic efforts were minimal. Likewise, the role of Vietnamese Air Force personnel in the program was hampered by the limited resources available to them, their lack of training in the technicalities of civic action, and the limited number of trained U.S. Air Force advisors available to instruct them properly.¹¹⁸ In February 1966, the Vietnamese Air Force Wing appealed to the U.S. Air Force Advisory Team at Tan Son Nhut for financial and technical assistance. In August the program was strengthened considerably with the appointment of a base civic action advisory council and the recruitment of the active support of the base commander. Representatives from each staff agency and tenant unit on base held membership on the council. This new coordinating group significantly increased cooperation between the U.S. and Vietnamese Air Forces.¹¹⁹

One of the first tasks undertaken by the council was the coordination of the perimeter hamlet project with local and provincial officials to integrate the proposed Air Force projects in the twelve hamlets into the government's revolutionary development plans for the province. Through this coordination, the needs and self-help plans of each hamlet were discussed with the province chief, the village chiefs, and the chiefs or mayors of each hamlet. Each resident U.S. Air Force unit at Tan Son Nhut was also assigned to a specific hamlet in the critical area surrounding the base. These American airmen from the 377th Combat Support Group worked closely with the previously assigned Vietnamese Air Force personnel to implement the individual hamlet rehabilitation plans.

Initially, each of the twelve hamlets was surveyed to determine its needs. Food supplements were distributed to needy families. Medical and dental examinations and treatments were administered. And Vietnamese servicemen, working with provincial revolutionary development teams, initiated a detailed census of each hamlet. The census provided such useful information as political and religious preferences of each family, as well as its economic status.

After the groundwork for the program had been laid by these preliminary actions, civic action personnel commenced major construction projects in hamlets where the needs of the residents had been confirmed by the provincial committee. Projects included the construction and repair of schools, churches, clinics, sanitation facilities, roads, culverts, and drainage systems. Local labor was used in each case. Building materials came largely from provincial sources as well as the Agency for International Development. Likewise, both the Vietnamese and U.S. Air Forces provided heavy construction equipment, transported building materials and other supplies, supervised all technical aspects of the projects, and often provided supplementary building materials when shortages developed. Provincial officials provided the hamlet work force with the necessary security.¹²⁰

Even with added American involvement on a planned basis and the benefits of increased coordination brought about by the efforts of the Air Force civic action advisory council, progress in carrying out the ambitious Tan Son Nhut perimeter program fell short of Seventh Air Force desires and expectations. The reasons can be attributed to several causes. Early in 1967 critical differences developed between American personnel of the 377th -Combat Support Group and Vietnamese in the 33d Wing. Majority opinion agreed that the plan had tried to accomplish too much, too fast and that possibly the civic action officer attached to the 377th Combat Support Group, in his zeal to push the program, had caused the Vietnamese to lose face because they were unable to keep up with the more rapid pace set by the Americans. Friction between the two groups reached such an intensity the Americans actually contemplated withdrawing from the program.¹²¹ Another shortcoming of the base perimeter defense program was the recurring failure to win widespread Vietnamese participation.¹²² At Tan Son Nhut the primary reason Vietnamese airmen did not participate in larger numbers was due to the substandard conditions under which they and their dependents had to live. Family quarters on base were in a deplorable state of repair, with minimal water supplies and sanitation facilities. Since civic activities often raised the lifestyles of the recipients above those of many of these Vietnamese Air Force families, airmen, already humiliated by their own poverty, understandably withheld their wholehearted support from programs which they thought lowered their social status in the eyes of the local populace.¹²³

Some efforts were made to improve the living conditions of these lower ranking airmen, but several seemingly insurmountable problems were encountered. While sufficient plans and manpower were on hand to bring about the needed improvements, significant material support was unavailable from almost all sources. Resources and commodities from neither the Agency for International Development nor other governmental relief societies which normally provided civic action funds could be used. Support for such purposes had to come entirely from benevolent private individuals or institutions. Likewise, the Vietnamese military lacked funds to undertake improvements on the scale required in this instance. Although the Vietnamese Air Force did have some uncommitted money, it was generally needed for more pressing concerns, and the logistical command became adept at dodging the issue. The Seventh Air Force did have the special 200,000 piaster assistance-in-kind fund, but this money, too, was limited and would not permit projects as large as the one needed for construction of military dependent housings. Moreover, the problem of substandard quarters was a national one and not amenable to an early solution. Then it was suggested that the strategic importance of the Tan Son Nhut Air Base should put it

in a category worthy of special consideration, it was pointed out that there were many other important strategic areas, such as the Bien Hoa complex and the ammunition dump across the river from Saigon which rated equal consideration.¹²⁴

More progress began to be made in 1967 when this problem came to the attention of Seventh Air Force headquarters. With authorization from the Air Force Directorate of Plans in Washington to General Nichols requested that all Seventh Air Force wings and groups expand their civic action programs to include assistance to the families of these Vietnamese airmen. Regular civic action sources could now be tapped for the necessary funds.¹²⁵

With this new arrangement, the building program gained momentum. The rehabilitation was handled as a joint self-help project. Americans provided most of the plans, equipment, and building materials; the Vietnamese supplied most of the manpower.¹²⁶ Generally this division of responsibility worked very well, although occasionally a number of minor problems would surface. U.S. brick making machines, for example, often produced building blocks too large for the proud, but small-framed Vietnamese to handle. And in at least one instance, implementation of faulty plans caused interior structures to flood during heavy rains. The program, nonetheless, was considered tremendously successful. In addition to improving the appearance of the air bases and the morale of the Vietnamese, it produced at least one side benefit: many Vietnamese airmen gained valuable civil engineering skills which could be transferred directly to their military jobs.¹²⁷

Another problem the Tan Son Nhut perimeter hamlet program faced revolved around the fact that there were many different military units performing civic action around the air base. The various services within the U.S. military establishment sent out teams, and there were civic action teams from other countries working there as well. This greatly complicated the task of coordination. Other coordination problems stemmed from a reluctance on the part of these non-combat personnel to consult district and village chiefs before implementing their programs.

When the food distribution program was first started up in the area, for example, civic action personnel failed to ask the local officials for nominations on who should run the program. Not only did these village authorities feel slighted, but the knowledge they could have provided on the character of the various applicants was not used. As a result, the individuals selected to distribute the food were of very poor quality. Soon there were numerous complaints about corruption. There were charges, for example, that much of the food given to the villagers ended up in the black market signifying that the food was not really needed by those receiving it. On the other hand, many of the more deserving villagers often received no assistance at all. Moreover, the program operators made little distinction between families loyal to the government and families of Viet Cong. So instead of being won over by these goodwill efforts, the villagers in the area complained of the program's injustices. One attitude survey funded by the U.S. Embassy during this time also indicated that the twelve hamlets around Tan Son Nhut that were targeted for civic activities had become overly dependent on military handouts for a significant portion of their subsistence. Except in cases of disaster relief, this was exactly opposite the result desired.¹²⁸

Rumors of these and other difficulties reached Seventh Air Force headquarters, and early in 1967 the command issued a directive that all U.S. Air Force base commanders would submit lists of civic action projects pertinent to their respective areas and indicate the coordination with sector and sub-sector chiefs that had been

made. It was specified that this was to be done before any future projects were undertaken. At Tan Son Nhut the commanding general, as installation coordinator, also accepted responsibility for coordinating the efforts of U.S. personnel stationed there, including the coordination of community relations with civic action.

By April, more positive results from the increased efforts at coordination could already be seen in several undertakings. In addition, a reassessment of the entire program brought a retrenchment along more realistic lines. The 33rd Vietnamese Air Force Wing continued its efforts unilaterally in the assigned twelve-hamlet area, conducting a wide variety of different civic action projects. American personnel, while not withdrawing completely from the twelve hamlets concentrated their efforts in two additional districts in Gia Dinh Province.

They also restructured their program more toward a few specific projects which they carried out with exceptional skill. They continued to help plan future activities and make recommendations on an advisory basis. Frequently they also accompanied the Vietnamese teams on projects requiring larger numbers of team members.

Following the reorganization, the Tan Son Nhut perimeter hamlet project expanded rapidly. The proximity of the air base to the capital city of Saigon motivated many to work harder trying to develop a model civic action program. After a short while, the reaction of the local populace became more open and friendly. In the hamlet of Dong Tam 6, for example, the response of residents to a new school—their first—was shown by turning over the hamlet vice chief, an active Viet Cong, to government authorities. Quite often also a home would burn to the ground in one of the hamlets completely wiping out a family's possessions. When the appeal for help came, Vietnamese and American airmen would appear on the scene almost immediately with emergency help and pre-assembled relief packages. The impact on the local populace was very positive. The common people were not used to immediate aid or concern from their government even though they were located on the outskirts of Saigon. Small projects such as these could only draw them closer to active support of their government.¹²⁹

Similar to the situation at Tan Son Nhut, every other Seventh Air Force base had a cluster of hamlets on its perimeter which needed assistance. To raise the social and economic status to a liveable standard and break the hold of the Viet Cong on the people, each base developed its own hamlet perimeter program. Progress was measured by the response of the local residents in providing intelligence information and in the resulting improvement in base security.¹³⁰ On that basis the small, but enthusiastic contingent of U.S. Air Force personnel of the 632nd Combat Support Group at Binh Thuy AB, located seventy-five miles southwest of Saigon in the Mekong delta, had one of the most successful Air Force efforts in South Vietnam.

During the first half of 1966, the Viet Cong had managed to shell the air base an average of once every month. They staged their attacks from nearby positions under the protection of supporters in hamlets located on the southern perimeter of the base. Consequently, the Air Force civic action team designed its program to win over the residents in those hamlets, and deny the enemy a friendly environment for his operations. In several strategically located hamlets, civic action personnel constructed and repaired community warehouses, sanitation facilities, schools, and clinics. One American and two Vietnamese Air Force doctors with their assistants visited residents on a regular weekly basis treating their sick, while one USAF captain traveled by sampan to more isolated areas. Special teams also distributed food supplements and

clothing to poor inhabitants. The U.S. Agency for International Development provided the funds for the construction projects. Much of the food came from the U.S. Operations Mission. Vietnamese Air Force participation on almost all projects was good.¹³¹

The results of this vigorous program paid off handsomely. In early October 1966, the Viet Cong moved into one of the perimeter hamlets in preparation for another mortar attack against the air base on October 12th. At great risk to their own lives, several residents of the hamlet reported plans of the attack to the security police at the base. Aided by this timely information, the police were able to move into the hamlet a couple of days prior to the planned enemy action and capture both mortars and ammunition. The security forces attributed their victory to the "fine efforts of the military civic action program" which had allowed the government to establish an excellent rapport" with the local populace.¹³² According to Binh Thuy base officials, local intelligence reporting on all Viet Cong activities progressively improved after this incident. Several months later, in December 1966, the Viet Cong did manage to strike the base with some mortar rounds, but they did so from positions set up seven kilometers from the base—well beyond the perimeter hamlets. Damage to the Air Force installation was consequently very minor.¹³³

Opportunities in the delta for humanitarian work also presented themselves in 1966. During the fall of that year severe floods struck the region. The rapid reaction of the two air forces strengthened significantly the response of the local populace rallying to the support of the government. Medical civic action teams from Binh Thuy were immediately activated to give immunization shots to the local people to prevent the outbreak of cholera and typhoid epidemics. Whenever the teams visited a hamlet more than a few miles from the base, Vietnamese helicopters transported the men, permitting a maximum effective working period in the hamlet and lessening the extensive traveling time usually required. This proved very important, especially since security protection for the civic teams had to be coordinated with other Air Force efforts requiring police protection.¹³⁴

To help out during the flood, Vietnamese and U.S. Air Force units at nearby Tan Son Nhut offered their services as well in an airlift of supplies to flood victims. The government gave the two wings responsibility for some three thousand homeless families in Men Giang Province on the Gulf of Siam. In a joint effort, the two groups of men assembled, and packaged into family-size bundles, seventy tons of clothing, foodstuffs, tents, and tools. Fifteen Vietnamese C-47s then shuttled between Saigon and the delta province airlifting the supplies to the main airfield in only a few hours. Because the Viet Cong controlled most of the province, close coordination with provincial military forces was necessary to secure the airfield for the delivery of the goods. An armed truck convoy then moved the supplies to the distribution point some forty kilometers away. It was estimated that through these actions the immediate needs of most of the three thousand families were met. The airlift was primarily a Vietnamese Air Force effort, stimulated and guided by U.S. Air Force personnel. The success of the undertaking indicated what could be accomplished by the indigenous military if their efforts were properly channeled and supervised.¹³⁵

In addition to flood disaster relief, Binh Thuy officers and airmen during the last months of 1966 contributed to the purchase of land for a Protestant religious-medical center in the town of Can Tho and undertook the building of a refugee school at Phong Dien. They also worked closely with Air Force chaplains to improve the

facilities of a maternity hospital and village clinic at Binh Thuy Village and distributed gifts of money, diapers, milk, juices, and other needed supplies to the Da la Providence Orphanage. At the village of Dau Sau, the construction of pews and kneelers for the community church helped to ease the ill-feelings of residents whose previous village had been almost completely destroyed in a bombing raid.¹³⁶

Bien Hoa Air Base, home of the USAF 3d Tactical Fighter Wing, also developed a very active perimeter hamlet program, involving three hamlets, a village, and a refugee camp in the vicinity. A number of large U.S. Army units were in the area and had assigned responsibilities for civic action projects in some perimeter settlements. Coordination and compromise, however, allowed the U.S. and Vietnamese air wings to work in those areas closest to the base which had not already been assigned to another military unit and also to provide medical help to an even larger area. The Air Force effort centered around a strong medical program, the distribution of food to needy families, and social and cultural development projects. As at Binh Thuy, Vietnamese Air Force personnel were active in the program and served also as psychological warfare agents. In the latter capacity, they were especially effective in winning an audience when they dressed themselves in the traditional Vietnamese peasant clothing—marked only with a small Air Force insignia—and uninhibitedly associated with the villagers while distributing leaflets and explaining Air Force motives and civic action goals. The leaflets described the government's concern for its people and identified the teams with the government.¹³⁷

As at other bases, the medical and dental services program at Bien Hoa proved to be one of the most successful and worthwhile civic action efforts. The 3d Tactical Fighter Wing provided outpatient medical treatment and instruction to individuals in orphanages as well as in surrounding rural communities. They concentrated their efforts in the Cong Thanh and Tan Uyen districts of Bien Hoa Province where such services were particularly inadequate. All work was performed on a voluntary basis by American Air Force medical personnel during their off-duty hours. The people's response to the voluntary effort was very good. In June 1965, approximately 300 patients were seen by Air Force doctors. Word spread of the program's effectiveness. By December the number of treatments had grown to 1,500 per month. And then, during the first four months of 1966, civic teams administered medical care to a total of 19,158 patients during some 134 medical visits. Twenty-four villages, a leper colony, and numerous orphanages and clinics were included in the visits. Community health improved considerably both as a direct result of the medical treatments and as a result of the distribution of soap and other sanitation supplies. On many occasions Vietnamese officials and individual citizens expressed their appreciation to the Americans for their help.¹³⁸

The food distribution program was handled almost entirely by Vietnamese personnel at Bien Hoa. From food furnished by the U.S. Operations Mission, the political warfare section of the Vietnamese Air Force maintained a stock of basic commodities ready for distribution in times of crisis as well as on a routine basis. Working with the hamlet chiefs who selected the families to receive this additional help, political warfare personnel distributed the supplements. On numerous occasions the food distribution program was conducted in conjunction with the health services program, with the base doctor accompanying the political warfare team when they made their distributions.¹³⁹ Construction projects were likewise often undertaken jointly and produced similar results. One interesting opportunity arose during the

summer of 1966 at Bien Hoa. The outcome proved that even with building materials themselves in critically short supply, having a beneficial construction program often demanded only a little time and ingenuity. In August the need for school furniture in the Bien Hoa elementary schools came to the attention of the local U.S. Agency for International Development representative and personnel from the 3d Tactical Fighter Wing. Lumber, a precious commodity in most areas of South Vietnam, was in short supply at the air base. To fill the request, Air Force personnel collected discarded M-82 and M-42 bomb fin crates. The delivery of the crates was a joint effort of the United States and Vietnamese Air Forces and the Agency for International Development. U.S. Air Force technicians then showed Agency representatives and Vietnamese school carpenters how to disassemble the crates and reassemble them to make serviceable and attractive school desks and benches. Paint and nails were the only consumable items Utilized. News of the successful Bien Hoa school furniture program quickly spread to outlying districts. Late that month, a request came from a distant village to help furnish fourteen classrooms with the "bomb fin crate" furniture. Vietnamese and American airmen transported the crates to the district where local school carpenters were again taught the construction technique. Simple gestures such as these helped the Vietnamese build a more workable society. They also turned up much valuable intelligence information and won many friends for governmental representatives.¹⁴⁰

On occasion however, accidents of war occurred which negated much of the goodwill which civic action personnel had labored to build up. Although the Vietnamese usually accepted these disasters as part of the normal course of war, such accidents could also make the peasants highly susceptible to Viet Cong propaganda. The United States and the Vietnamese governments usually acted immediately to keep the Viet Cong out and to undertake activities designed to restore lost public confidence.¹⁴¹ Such was the case on July 1, 1966, when a Third Tactical Fighter Wing aircraft inadvertently dropped a cluster bomb on the village of Tan Uyen, about ten miles north of Bien Hoa. It impacted in the market place, scattering bomblets and debris for approximately 600 yards. A classroom full of children in a nearby school was hit by bomblets and major portions of the pod. Eight Vietnamese children were killed and about forty other children and adults were injured. The village itself suffered substantial damage. Wing medical personnel, U.S. Army sector advisors, and Vietnamese provincial officials responded immediately to help the injured in every possible way and to evacuate the more seriously wounded. The first Americans to appear at the scene of the accident were understandably greeted with considerable open hostility. One officer was fired at by small arms. Viet Cong agitators capitalized on the incident and made every effort to use it against the South Vietnamese government and the United States in the period that followed.¹⁴²

The massive humanitarian effort mounted by Air Force volunteers, however, ultimately was able to offset the communist propaganda effort. Within twenty-four hours volunteer groups had started to repair the damaged structures in the village. Emergency supplies were distributed through Vietnamese provincial officials, and the legal officer from the fighter wing compiled a listing of the injured and dead in order that solatium payments could be made to the families affected. Within two weeks Air Force volunteers had rebuilt two houses, repaired damaged roofs on several others, restored the village market place, and provided numerous other services. The village inhabitants and the Vietnamese elsewhere in South Vietnam, reached through the

Vietnamese Information Service, reacted very well to these sincere efforts to rebuilt the damaged village and make reparations to the injured and families of the deceased. Before the end of the month, relationships between civilians and the military were back to normal and, according to Colonel Robert A. Ackerly, commander of the Third Tactical Fighter Wing, still definitely pro-American.¹⁴³ In similar instances at numerous other villages, both monetary indemnification and assistance in the form of civic action projects helped compensate Vietnamese civilians for injury, death, or property damage suffered as a result of wartime accidents and combat and herbicide operations. Although such actions could not repay the Vietnamese for the loss of family members and close relatives, they did go a long way toward easing their hardships and alleviating many adverse psychological effects.¹⁴⁴

DECLARATION OF THE NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT COMMITTEE PHUOC THANH DISTRICT ABOUT THE SLAUGHTER MADE BY AMERICANS AND THEIR SERVANTS TO THE PEOPLE AND PUPILS OF TAN UYEN VILLAGE

At 0830 on July 1. 1966, two US jet planes following the order of American Chiefs and their servants, have poured dozens and dozens of bombs upon a popular elementary school, this started from the market and spread into the Rach Tre bridge, in Tan Uyen Village, caused death and wounds to more than 80 persons including soldiers' families. Particularly, 54 young pupils died and/or were wounded at the school. Besides, 6 houses being burned, this slaughter caused heavy casualties to the inhabitants' property of the district, After dropping bombs, they concentrated all district policemen who were ordered to guard the main place and streets, forbidding the people to gather. Then 2 helicopters were sent to the scene as well as a red cross truck in order to transport bodies and wounded without leaving any trail. At the above named school, they abandoned 7 corpses of young pupils, however 4 children, with slight wounds, escaped and returned home while 43 were taken away. Here is a very cruel crime, with willful murder, causing death to people and children who were innocent, even in the zone which was under their provisory control. The above action has unveiled and shown to us their real face, the false face of the American Empire and its servants, though they always boast about their mission of maintaining peace by giving safety and protection to the inhabitants of their villages, districts and strategic hamlets. And it is not the first time they dropped bombs and massacred our population. Therefore, our national liberation front committee, in Phuoc Thanh district has violently attacked and denounced their savage action to the entire population and the whole world. This crime shows that the enemy is in a deficient situation, in peril, and their reaction was a reaction of a wild beast full of rage, trying to struggle before dying. Not only has our strong fighting spirit not been influenced, but this fact also gives us aversion which increases more and more and will help us in our fighting against the American Empire and its servants leading us to the final victory. The national liberation front committee of Phuoc Thanh district sincerely expresses its condolence to all members of families which were the victims of the slaughter.

This aversion always remains at the bottom of our hearts, and on this occasion, we request the population, military as well as civilian, to cooperate with us in order to take our revenge and make them pay their debt of blood.

—July 2, 1966

Source: Report of the Tan Uyen Incident, 3d Tactical Fighter Wing, n.d., atch to EOTR, Col Robert A. Ackerly, Comdr, 3d TFW, Bien Hoa AB (Nov 10, 1965-Nov 2, 1966). Oct 15, 1966.

GVN PSYCHOLOGICAL LEAFLET FOR TAN UYEN INCIDENT

DEAR PEOPLE

By the propaganda of the enemy reasoning methods, the Viet Cong spread false information in order to deceive the unaffected people, but in fact, their policy of propaganda doesn't correspond to the truth, and you are hereby informed of it.

As you can see and hear, the aircraft accident on July 1, 1966 at the market of TAN UYEN only caused a minor loss to the population, property damage, injuries and deaths. Immediately after the accident, the Government with the cooperation of the Army gave proper help to the victims by moving them to the hospital, in order to give them special medical care, and at this date, most have returned home, with their families to their daily life. Only 4 persons still remain at the Bien Hoa hospital and all will fully recover.

Besides, the Government has, promptly and efficiently, made payments and given aid to the 53 victims' families in the total amount of 150,000 piasters, according to the degree of injury, varying from 800 piasters to 4,000 piasters.

In parallel to this help and assistance, the Government has pressed forward the reconstruction and repair of the property damages, to the concerned people. There is the truth as you can see by yourself, but the Viet Cong have twisted the facts. They misrepresent the seriousness of the incident when they say all victims were taken away without leaving any trail at the scene.

DEAR PEOPLE

As you know, our country is in a state of war, and this accident, though unintentional, could happen in any other country. But do you ever bring into question: Who provokes this war, if not the sneaking Viet Cong, betraying the people and the interest of the nation, a mass of communist servants who faithfully obey the Russian empire and Red China, headed by the big Vietnamese traitor HO CHI MINH.

DEAR PEOPLE

In view of their fraud and shrewdness, you are requested to stay awake, keep your self control to avoid their cruel traps, for they are taking advantage of the situation for their propaganda policy, in spreading out false news.

DOWN WITH THE VC ALL VC OUT OF OUR COUNTRY

Source: Report of the Tan Uyen Incident, 3d Tactical Fighter Wing, n.d., atch to EOTR, Col Robert A. Ackerly, Comdr, 3d TFW, Bien Hoa AB (Nov 10, 1965-Nov 2, 1966), Oct 15, 1966.

In 1967, the Bien Hoa program came to full flower. Many of the projects which had been started in 1966 were continued and increased in intensity. During the year, for example, more than 120 tons of commodities contributed by Americans, non-profit organizations, and U.S. servicemen were distributed to hospitals, schools, orphanages, and refugee camps in the province. Moreover, that year the base received a full-time, full-tour civic action officer—the first in South Vietnam.¹⁴⁵ The chief emphasis the new officer brought to the program was the need to let the Vietnamese do the civic action job themselves, Americans could help and give advice, but the majority of the work and the final responsibility had to be borne by those who were to use the facilities and services. A major criticism of civic action as it had been practiced in Vietnam prior to this was the unilateral approach taken by most U.S. servicemen. Action-oriented Americans—more concerned over getting a specific job done than organizing the job so as to achieve the best social and psychological results—would many times end up doing the whole job themselves. The publicity which followed naturally emphasized that the work had been done by courtesy of the United States.¹⁴⁶ While this approach accomplished the task quickly and efficiently, it ignored the Vietnamese, many of whom were not at all reluctant to sit in the shade and watch. It also did nothing to build up the image of the local government.¹⁴⁷

To increase Vietnamese participation, the base's new civic action officer instituted a number of reforms in the base program. Primarily he insisted that civic action personnel as well as Air Force volunteers align themselves "only with those people who would help themselves."¹⁴⁸ In the distribution program, which was already being run to a large extent by the Vietnamese, this meant that practically the only responsibilities the civic action office retained were those of handling complaints about inequities in distributions (which were to be settled in the local community rather than distantly) and keeping close check to see that the local leaders were honest in managing the material given them. In the medical program, the actual examinations and medical care continued to be given by those possessing the needed skills, but now villagers themselves were also given instructions in hygiene and basic preventive medicine which they could put to work on their own.

On building projects, an emphasis on Vietnamese self-help meant that villagers who showed no enthusiasm for personal and community betterment often found the Civic action team leaving their territory for another village which did. The use of discarded boxes and crates had by this time come to form a basis for much of the construction which took place in the Bien Hoa perimeter hamlets. Crates would be delivered to villagers needing wood to build homes. After adequate instructions, the civic action construction team would leave to return later to check the villagers' progress. Often some villagers had used all the wood given them while others had not even bothered to break their crates apart. Those who had worked hard received material and supplies in larger quantities.

One particularly successful construction project employing this principle of local initiative involved the construction and operation of Thang Long School in the perimeter village of Tam Hiep. Many refugees fleeing areas more disrupted by the war and communist terrorism than Bien Hoa, had settled in this nearby village, bringing with them large numbers of elementary and junior high school-aged children. A local Vietnamese instructor, Nguyen Xuan Tho, conceived of a plan to educate the youngsters. Tho hired several local teachers from funds collected through a small

tuition fee, but he failed to raise enough money to build the additional classrooms needed.

At this point the Bien Hoa civic action office heard of the proposal for the schools expansion and the problems Tho was encountering. Air Force personnel at the base were already deeply involved in furthering Vietnamese education, with more than forty volunteers teaching conversational English to some 400 youngsters at Ngo Quyen High School in Bien Hoa. Determined to help Tam Hiep youth also, civic action workers collected and transported large quantities of empty bomb crates to the village. In keeping with its established guidelines, the civic action office did not volunteer to help the residents with the construction, although it did suggest that part of the scrap wood be sold to buy additional supplies needed to complete the project. Teachers, parents, villagers, and the schools Boy Scout troop did the actual work. When the classrooms were completed, additional instructors were hired to teach the expected influx of students.

The Bien Hoa civic action office also initiated a "Dollars for Scholars" program for the school to provide tuition scholarships for 515 refugee students who otherwise could not attend. Personal contributions from private U.S. citizens and Bien Hoa Air Base personnel provided operational funds for the program. Students on scholarship were required to attend class regularly and maintain at least a "B" average. Each month the donors from the base would visit the school to give each child his money and to check on his progress. In this way, not only did the students experience personal involvement with their benefactors representing the government, but they also became more deeply committed to their community and its educational program.

Except for fund collection and management, the Vietnamese themselves ran the program completely. Among other things, teachers and local officials set eligibility requirements, selected the students who would receive assistance, and monitored the progress of each recipient. After only a short while, school officials became convinced of the program's utility. At least one school principal gave it credit for a decline of Viet Cong success in gaining recruits among students on scholarship.

The village as a whole thus had a stake in Thang Long School. The personal involvement of each resident helped to assure that the educational facility would escape the work of Viet Cong arsonists. Allowing the villagers themselves to do the actual construction, moreover, freed civic action personnel to supervise additional projects and thereby increase the pace of community development in other areas as well. Throughout 1967, for example, as many as thirty-five or forty different civic action projects were going on at all times throughout the province. This could never have been the case had civic action personnel done all the work themselves. In addition, the scholarship program, by educating underprivileged youth in the meaning of citizenship, set such an outstanding example that General William W. Momyer, Seventh Air Force commander, called it one of the first truly long-lasting civic action projects in South Vietnam. He suggested that each Air Force unit sponsor a similar program. By the end of 1967, airmen from Bien Hoa had expanded their scholarship program to other nearby schools and contributed more than \$12,000 personally to the effort. Other bases also accepted General Momyer's suggestion and implemented their own programs. Before long, "Dollars for Scholars" had acquired national dimensions, and the revolutionary development committee assumed responsibility for its coordination with other national pacification efforts.¹⁴⁹ Although base defense was a prime reason for undertaking civic activities in communities adjacent to South

Vietnamese air bases, personnel at some Air Force installations developed programs which went beyond this basic objective. The "Dollars for Scholars" program, for example, fell into this category. The humanitarian flood relief efforts of servicemen from Tan Son Nhut and Binh Thuy were also activities motivated by higher goals. One civic action program in particular, however, was considered especially important, not only for air base security, but for building up South Vietnam as a nation and for securing the peace. The program was called medical civic action.¹⁵⁰

The use of medicine as a counterinsurgency tool had been conceived in June 1962 as part of the overall military civic action program for Vietnam. Promoters regarded it as one of the most promising fields in which to operate because Americans could supply technical competence and medicinal supplies and equipment which the Viet Cong could not match. The idea behind the program was to bring basic health services to as many Vietnamese as possible, including those who suffered injuries related to the war. This usually meant conducting "sick call" regularly in villages and refugee camps. As a rule, only out-patient, dispensary-type care was given. Therapy ranged from simple medical treatments administered on the spot to highly complicated surgical procedures. The latter were undertaken by a few special surgical teams assigned to civilian hospitals to augment local medical staffs. Supplies were furnished under the Military Assistance Program. Nearly eleven million treatments by U.S. military personnel were recorded in 1967 alone.

This figure did not include the numerous unrecorded treatments provided on the spur of the moment to meet an immediate and unanticipated requirement, nor did it include the approximately 15,000 dental treatments per month carried out by U.S. forces dental personnel that same year. Veterinarian support was also available as a part of the medical civic action program. During 1967, 21,391 animals were immunized against rabies and 2,254 farm animals (cattle, water buffalo, and hogs) were treated for various diseases.¹⁵¹

It was expected that these benevolent activities would impress the people with the government's concern for their welfare and discourage them from feeding and sheltering the Viet Cong. To be effective, it was planned that Vietnamese military personnel would work initially with U.S. medical teams, eventually taking over and running the program on their own.¹⁵² After a particular area had been cleared by combat operations, the Vietnamese military would then pass the program on to local rural health authorities, who operated under the jurisdiction of the Vietnamese Ministry of Public Health. The rural health program would thus become a permanent and expected governmental service.¹⁵³ Especially in the early phases of the program, however, Vietnamese medical technicians were in extremely short supply and American teams did much of the work themselves. The Air Commandos, for example, concentrated their civic action efforts around four mobile medical teams which traveled throughout the South Vietnamese interior, stopping at each village to treat the ill and dispense medicine. Members of the teams spent six months at a time in the field. One representative group traveled more than 8,000 miles over jungle-enshrouded roads, trails, and streams to treat some 92,000 people during one six-month period. On numerous occasions they had to resort to travel by ox carts and dugout boats to complete their journey.¹⁵⁴ Some Vietnamese doctors, nevertheless, did become deeply involved in the program. When this occurred, the public response was particularly strong and positive.¹⁵⁵

A second program, closely related to medical civic action, was the military

provincial health assistance project begun in November 1965. It was the largest, broadest, and best organized of the military's civilian medical aid programs, and, according to Ambassador Lodge, one of the most important of all counterinsurgency activities of the United States in Vietnam.¹⁵⁶ The objective of this latter enterprise, as the name implies, was to supplement medical care given to civilians in South Vietnam's forty-five provincial hospitals and at the various United Nations regional hospitals scattered throughout the country and to help the staffs at these facilities develop more adequate public health programs. It was carried out by twenty-two U.S. military teams (seven of which were manned completely by Air Force people), each composed of three medical officers one administrative officer, and twelve enlisted technicians.¹⁵⁷ In addition, by the end of 1966, there were teams in place from the Philippines, Korea, Spain, Iran, Japan and Australia. The American teams were assigned to the U.S., Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, for command and control purposes. The chief of the public health division of the U.S. Operations Mission exercised operational control over the effort. Each team was detailed to a selected provincial hospital and integrated into the existing medical structure under the direction of the province chief and senior medical officials. The teams not only administered medical care directly to Vietnamese civilians but also advised on public health and sanitation procedures and provided training, whenever possible, to Vietnamese health personnel so they could eventually function on their own.¹⁵⁸

Since provincial hospitals varied in quality of structures and availability of utilities and equipment, all teams were equipped with electrical generators, field surgical and medical equipment, a one-ton truck, and a jeep which could be converted into an ambulance when one was needed. In addition, some teams had water purification equipment and field X-ray units. The teams were generally resupplied through a medical material support system established at Cam Ranh Bay.¹⁵⁹

Before assignment to Vietnam, team members attended a three-week training course on Vietnamese military, political, and social problems; the use of field equipment; diseases frequently encountered in Vietnam; and treatment for dental emergencies. They also received rudimentary training on use of weapons and advice on how best to function under combat conditions and in a wartime environment. Despite the equipment and training provided, however, the teams still encountered numerous problems and learned many lessons during their first year in Southeast Asia. Security posed one of the biggest problems. Many of the provincial hospitals were situated within villages surrounded by Viet Cong-held territory. This severely restricted travel and complicated measures to resupply the group. Communication with Vietnamese nationals caused additional problems. Their three-week preparatory course did not allow team members time to learn the Vietnamese language. And the problem was not solved by hiring English language interpreters since South Vietnam had a shortage of those conversant with medical terminology.

Inadequate medical facilities was the program's third major handicap. Although some of the provincial hospitals were relatively new, many lacked all but rudimentary electrical, water, and sewage systems. These conditions demanded that teams—in addition to being medically competent—be skilled in improvisation as well. A fourth difficulty with which the program had to contend was that of lack of coordination with other aid programs in the country. In addition to medical programs of the Vietnamese armed forces there were numerous special civilian-conducted programs sponsored by the United States and many non-communist nations. Competition and duplication

were often the result. Yet even then, competition many times led to superior performance, and duplication was far superior to the alternative of no medical treatment at all.

The last major problem which these medical teams faced was overcoming the hampering effects of communist propaganda. Many times the Viet Cong were able to exploit the ignorance of the villagers to their own advantage. As an illustration, when one mobile medical team arrived at a remote hamlet, it found that the local townsfolk refused to take cholera immunization shots. Conversations with several villagers produced the reason: Viet Cong propagandists had been in the area spreading rumors that the shots contained deadly serum. After the young hamlet chief volunteered to take the first injection, the rest of the hamlet followed suit. When the medical team returned later to give booster shots, however, the villagers were in a state of panic. The Viet Cong had returned and told them that the poison in the injection would result in a slow, agonizing death that might not come for three years. A similar situation occurred in the central highlands where malaria was widespread and medical teams had to spray considerable amounts of DDT to combat the disease carrying mosquitos. In these areas, medical teams were regularly abducted and sometimes assassinated by mountaineer guerrillas who were convinced that the teams were spreading the poison to kill the inhabitants of the area.¹⁶⁰ Besides the regular medical civic action program and the provincial hospital project, a third medical-aid program was operative during much of this period as well. This effort—the civilian war casualty hospitalization program—supplemented the hospitalization capabilities of the Vietnamese government for dealing with war-related injuries. A modest estimate of civilian casualties related to the war was put at 50,000 a year in 1967.¹⁶¹ Many of these cases could not be handled adequately in provincial hospitals. In October 1967, three U.S. military hospitals in the country were designated exclusively to receive these referrals. The undertaking lagged at first. Casualties were occurring throughout South Vietnam, not just in three locations. Most patients could be evacuated a considerable distance by U.S. military aircraft, but many of these civilians only reluctantly left their native areas for hospitalization elsewhere.

The following year it was decided to sacrifice the visibility of the program to insure its success. Since the most effective approach would be joint occupancy in the already existing U.S. military hospital system, all U.S. hospitals were opened for such use. This practice was not new. From the arrival of the first U.S. medical facilities, local civilians had been treated in military hospitals alongside U.S. personnel on a space-available basis. In 1967 the system was still in operation in enough locations to prove the feasibility of such a program for civilians suffering from war-related injuries as well. After it was implemented wounded American serviceman continued to receive treatment on a first priority basis, but now injured Vietnamese civilians could also receive quality care closer to their own communities. Few problems resulted from using the facilities jointly.¹⁶²

This last civilian health care program became particularly important in treating persons wounded accidentally by South Vietnamese or American military operations. While it was not always successful in restoring lost confidence, the overall record was good, and in almost all cases much pain and suffering was alleviated. As the program became increasingly more successful in reaching the wounded, the Viet Cong mounted their propaganda effort in an attempt to frighten people away. Reports from some communist propaganda sources held that patients were often poisoned at

the installations and would never return home alive. Others maintained the United States charged for its services.¹⁶³

The development, operation, and impact of the medical civic action program were probably illustrated better by the work of Air Force personnel at Pleiku Air Base than at any other location in South Vietnam. The 633rd Combat Support Group at Pleiku earned this distinction because its medical services program was a truly self-help effort that dramatically altered the lives of the people it touched.¹⁶⁴ Before it became effective, however, it passed through a period often marked by frustration on the part of civic action personnel and contempt on the part of those whose respect it was supposed to win.

Pleiku Air Base was located in the South Vietnamese central highlands strategically centered between Saigon and the demilitarized zone and less than thirty miles from the Cambodian border. The city of Pleiku was relatively small with few native Vietnamese inhabitants. The non-Vietnamese, Jarai Montagnards surrounded the military base and completely dominated the area. Because of Pleiku's isolated location and the fact that the Montagnards were long-standing enemies of the Vietnamese, the base's security depended to a large extent on establishing good relations with these people.

Initially, American civic action personnel found their associations with the Montagnards rewarding in several ways. The Jarai were naturally friendly, quick to learn new skills, and extremely hard-working. Many of them frequently opened their homes to fellow villagers and civic action workers alike, sharing their food and drink and the benefits of any of their enterprises. The Americans soon discovered, however, that these villagers were an extremely proud and fiercely independent people. Not only did they resent outside intrusions and efforts to change their lifestyle, but they also regarded American attempts at civic action as "charity" designed to change them into beggars and shiftless people. Several different civic activities were undertaken, but success was limited in most cases.¹⁶⁵

Early in 1967, Dr. Daniel C. Conlon, A U.S. Air Force medical corps captain, arrived at Pleiku Air Base intent on setting up a medical civic action program among the Jarai. His initial efforts followed the standard pattern established by civic action programs in other areas. Visits were made to surrounding areas to provide free examinations and medical treatments, and attempts were made to dispense food, clothing, and advice on a regular basis. Although on the surface the villagers appeared to appreciate the medical care and the handouts, it soon became apparent they were deeply humiliated by such treatment. They immediately perceived that Americans were trying to buy their friendship, and they were disgusted by what they considered ostentatious displays of American wealth and superiority. The whole American concept of charity seemed to be foreign to their culture.¹⁶⁶

This initial failure led to introspection and revision of the program's procedures. Dr. Conlon spent considerable time visiting with the villagers, accepting their hospitality, learning their customs and some of their language, and seeking advice from other Air Force and U.S. Army special forces personnel who had worked with the Montagnards for a longer period of time. After many months, a program of medical self-help emerged, based on mutual friendship and understanding. With assurances that their taboos would be carefully honored, Montagnard medicine men agreed to participate in a three-month training course in rudimentary Western medicine. The schooling was conducted at the U.S. Air Force medical facility on the

base and at the Montagnard hospital maintained by the Army's Fifth Special Forces unit.

The course was an immediate success. The Montagnards were strong, energetic workers, eager to help themselves. These qualities fit well into the American approach to get the job done quickly and efficiently. Moreover, the assistance offered by the "modern doctors" who graduated from the program was readily accepted by the villagers. U.S. medical teams now began to function in their more beneficial advisory and training capacity, treating only extremely difficult or unusual cases.

After a second class of Montagnard medical technicians had graduated from the school, the program began to expand rapidly. Other villages requested similar civic action visitors, and a permanent Montagnard training center was established at the special forces hospital, offering instruction in dental care as well. Later, a U.S. Agency for International Development training facility for Montagnards from all areas of the central highlands also expanded its medical and dental program.

By 1968, the cost for the three-month course had dropped to just over one hundred dollars per student. And Americans were convinced not only that the self-help program had established a much higher level of medical competency in the region, but that it also possessed all the characteristics necessary to continue indefinitely after the United States had withdrawn from the country.¹⁶⁷

The lessons the medical group learned in establishing their civic action program were quickly assimilated and re-applied by other Air Force civic teams at Pleiku. Projects were begun to improve agriculture, livestock herds, water supplies, education, and housing. One of the most successful projects led to the development of a small-scale cottage industry involving the manufacture of crossbows, swords, blowpipes, shields, textiles, and other Montagnard artifacts bought extensively by military personnel as souvenirs. A group of men from a number of different units on base served as salesmen and distributors. By the spring of 1968, more than \$10,000 worth of these goods had been sold. The money was then used by the villagers to purchase such items as soap, clothes, medical supplies, and tools.¹⁶⁸

Like the medical services program, the success of each of these new civic undertakings revolved around developing close relationships with the Montagnard people and then recruiting their support and active participation on the project. Emphasis was placed on avoiding handouts and working as much as possible with the village leaders. The civic action office on base soon learned that this called for a new caliber of civic action personnel—men willing to learn the language, eat native foods, work with the people at their own pace, and above all, treat each individual with respect. When the need was made known, however, volunteers emerged from all units on the base to participate.

Although tangible results from such activities and services were difficult to measure, many Air Force men who participated in the program were convinced that it had contributed substantially to the base's security. over a twelve month period during 1967 and 1968, the installation had remained relatively peaceful despite intense enemy activity in the surrounding areas.¹⁶⁹ A more interesting effect was the impact the program had on the propaganda and terror tactics of the Viet Cong. As one observer noted, before the self-help civic program was begun, victims of terrorism would often only shrug their shoulders at destroyed school buildings and rice paddles, seeming to say, "Oh well, the Americans will come in and rebuild whatever we lost in the attack." On projects in which the villagers themselves participated directly in the

planning and work, however, a noticeable change in attitude was evident. In such cases, a Viet Cong attack provoked anger and antagonism toward the saboteurs. The village residents had suddenly acquired a stake in the project's survival; it now became theirs to protect.¹⁷⁰ This was precisely the goal the United States had for Vietnam: building up a capable country, willing to support and defend itself.

These self-help techniques had similar impact at almost all other air bases where they were applied. The medical civic action program was especially successful in garnering support for the government and security for its military installations.¹⁷¹ The relative peace Nha Trang enjoyed, for example, was attributed by some to the very successful "seagoing" medical program started there by an inter service team of Army and Air Force doctors to serve communities in outlying areas.¹⁷² And in the Nhon Trach sector of Bien Hoa province, Air Force doctors were very successful as well. In November 1966, the local Vietnamese militiamen requested that U.S. Air Force medical teams accompany them on a "clear and hold" operation in the sector. The local military cleared the hamlets of Viet Cong and then held and secured them as other military forces escorted the medical team into each hamlet where a clinic was set up in the residence of a local inhabitant. In most cases the hamlet residents had not seen a doctor or a medical aide in several years, or a dentist in their entire lifetime.¹⁷³ The peasants were so favorably impressed by these medical visits, many hamlet chiefs made the doctors promise that they would return again to help their people. Very shortly news of the "painless" dentists spread throughout the sector being cleared, and people from distant hamlets infiltrated through Viet Cong-held territory to be treated for toothaches and to have teeth extracted. The doctors who participated in the program saw it not only as a visible counter to propaganda against the government but also as a successful prelude to a self-help rehabilitation of the hamlets. The sincere concern the doctors had shown for improving the health of the villagers, in turn strengthened the desires of the local people to help themselves socially and economically and to draw closer to the Vietnamese government.¹⁷⁴

Not all civic programs, of course, worked as smoothly as these, or were as successful as those undertaken at Pleiku. Local villagers themselves would often sabotage their own projects. At one base, for example, doors and shutters were consistently torn off a community latrine. The residents apparently felt the lumber could be put to better use.¹⁷⁵ At another location, a shortage of Vietnamese physicians hampered the medical civic action program. Americans there began balking at delivering babies when they discovered that it had become a status symbol for the women to have their children delivered by an American. Many of the technicians had found themselves doing practically nothing else.¹⁷⁶

More serious problems were encountered in other areas. The air base at Da Nang, for instance, experienced a unique problem initiating a base perimeter program. Being within Da Nang City boundaries, the base was completely surrounded by a perimeter guard of U.S. Marines. The Marine civic action battalion for I Corps supposedly held all responsibility for air base perimeter hamlet rehabilitation. But because of its heavy commitments with the maneuvering battalions elsewhere in I Corp the civic action battalion was unable to carry out projects in all the hamlets surrounding the base. At first it was extremely difficult to break through the diplomatic barrier of the Da Nang City mayor and the U.S. Marine Corps staff to convince them that the perimeter hamlets, although within the city limits, still needed assistance. After several intense discussions, the local U.S. and Vietnamese Air Force

wings received authorization to rehabilitate one hamlet with some 2,500 people. The hamlet was considered especially important strategically since it had served as the site of many Viet Cong mortar attacks on the base. The time and effort spent in establishing the perimeter hamlet project resulted in excellent rapport with the local U.S. military and Vietnamese government officials and eased the development of the civic action program at Da Nang. Subsequently, Air Force personnel were made responsible for Than Khe Village, a much larger area containing a population of 92,000 people located in ten hamlets and two refugee camps.¹⁷⁷

Equally complicated problems were encountered at Cam Ranh Bay. The air base there was located on an isolated peninsula, with the nearest hamlet miles away. In addition, no Vietnamese Air Force personnel were stationed at the base when the first USAF civic action officer arrived. Despite these handicaps, the Seventh Air Force was able to initiate a very productive "perimeter" program. Three not-so-distant hamlets and a refugee settlement consisting of about thirty hamlets were selected on the mainland as the target population. A well-planned medical project created a lot of enthusiasm among the peasants and got the base's program off to a strong start. Eventually a close working relationship was developed with the local officials in the area and the civic action office could report a noticeable change in popular attitudes toward American military personnel.¹⁷⁸

Stories of similar successes in solving problems and establishing worthwhile civic programs were recorded at almost all other air bases in South Vietnam. It was evident that by the end of 1967, the Air Force had gained much experience in conducting civic action as a counter to insurgency. A real test of its applicability in pacifying the country and building a viable nation, however, still lay in the months ahead.

NOTES

Chapter IV: Reviving Pacification and Civic Action Strategies

1. John P. McConnell, "From the Chief of Staff," Airman, Oct 66.
2. Hist, USMACV, 1966, p 1a
3. Hist, USMACV, 1967, III, 1135.
4. Gravel Pentagon Papers, II, 549.
5. Charles Mohr, "To Win People to Win the War," New York Times, Feb 13, 1966, p 4.
6. 7th AFP 55-1, 7AF In-Country Tactical Air Ops Handbook, Mar 20, 1968, p 121; 7th AFR 28-1, -Civic Action Program, Aug 1. 1968. The Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, officially defined revolutionary development as "the integrated military and civil process to restore, consolidate and expand government control so that nation building can progress throughout the Republic of Vietnam. It consists of those coordinated military and civil actions to liberate the people from Viet Cong control; restore public security; initiate political, economic and social development; extend effective Government of Vietnam authority; and win the willing support of the people toward these ends." Revolutionary Development Support Newsletter, Revolutionary Development Support Directorate, USMACV, Jan 31, 1967.
7. For example, see Gravel Pentagon Papers, II, 547.
8. Annual Message to Congress on the State of the Union, Jan 12, 1966, in Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson, 1966, I, 9-11; Douglas-S. Blaufarb, The Counterinsurgency Era: U. S Doctrine and Performance, 1950 to the Present (New York: The Free Press, 1977), p 209.
9. Quoted in R. H. Shackford, "Lodge Pushes Political Issue," Washington News, Jul 12, 1965, p 13.
10. Gravel Pentagon Papers, II, 534.
11. Ibid, pp 516-17; 527-33.
12. For details, see Ibid., pp. 516, 521-27.
13. John C. Donnell, "Pacification Reassessed," Asian Survey, Aug 67, p 572.
14. See Lawrence E. Grinter., "South Vietnam: Pacification Denied,," South-East Asian Spectrum, Jul 75, p 60.
15. Ibid.
16. Shackford, "Lodge Pushes Political Issue," p 13.
17. Gravel Pentagon Papers, II, 530,
18. Ibid, p 517.
19. Stanley Karnow, "Lansdale Legend Under Viet Fire," Washington Post, Feb 25, 1966, p 1; Richard Critchfield, "Lansdale Aims at Social Revolution," Washington Star, Oct 19, 1965, p 20.
20. For an expansion of the idea of the impact on Lodge and the "true believers" on Washington, see Gravel Pentagon Papers, II, 527-33.
21. Gravel Pentagon Papers, II, 542-543. By the end of 1965, the United States had been bombing North Vietnam for ten months and had committed 197,000 American servicemen to the fray.
22. Special Message to Congress on the Foreign Aid Program, Feb 1, 1966, in Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson, 1966, I, 124.
23. Counterinsurgency Bluebook Fiscal Year 1966, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Nov 15, 1966,

p 280.

24. Besides President Johnson, Americans attending the meeting included Rusk, McNamara, Secretary of Agriculture Orvill Freeman, Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare John W. Gardner, AID Director David Bell, as well as other presidential staff members and technical personnel. Ambassador Lodge and General Westmoreland were among those representing the U.S. Mission in Saigon.

25. Gravel Pentagon Papers, II, 549.

26. Ibid., pp 549-50.

27. Johnson, Vantage Point, p 244; Gravel Pentagon Papers, II, 552.

28. The Declaration of Honolulu, Feb 8, 1966, in Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson, 1966, I, 154-55.

29. 7th AF notebook, Seventh Air Force Civic Action Program, Oct 66; Philip Geyelin, "Humphrey Says Meaning of Honolulu Talks Is a Sweeping U.S. Commitment for Asia," Wall Street Journal, Apr 20, 1966, p 32.

30. R. W. Apple, Jr. "Hopes for Pacification," New York Times, Nov 8, 1966, p 6.

31. See for example, Gravel Pentagon Papers, II, 518-19, 565.

32. Counterinsurgency Bluebook, Fiscal Year 1966, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Nov 15, 1966, p 289.

33. Ltr, Col Jack W. Hayes, Chief of Staff, 7th AF to MACV-MACPD, subj: Air Force Civic Action Program, Jun 14, 1966-hist, Office of Chaplains, Jan-Jun 66, pp 23-24.

34. Ltr, Lt Col V. F. Kulowatz, Staff Chaplain, 2d AD, to 3TFW, et al, subj: Humanitarian Services Program, Jan 17, 1966; ltr, Col J. W. Hayes, CS 7th AF, to MACV-MACPD, subj: Air Force Civic Action Program, Jun 14, 1966.

35. Ltr, Lt Gen W. W. Momyer, Comdr, 7th AF to 3TFW, et al, subj: Seventh Air Force Civic Action Program, Oct 8, 1966.

36. MACV Directive 515-2, Psychological Operations/Military Civic Action, Apr 30, 1966, p 3, On Aug 1, 1968, Seventh Air Force published 7AFR 28-1 (Civic Action Program) to implement this directive.

37. USAF Military Civic Action, Semiannual Report (DCS/Plans and Operations, USAF, Oct 68), p 23; minutes, Seventh Air Force Civic Action Council, Nov 10, 1966.

38. Lee Bonetti, USAF Civic Action in Republic of Vietnam (Project CHECO, Hickam AFB, Hawaii, 1968), p 3.

39. Msg, State/AID/Defense to multiple addressees, CA-11981, Jun 8 1966, in hist, Dir/Plans, USAF, Jan 1-Jun 30, 1966, Vol 30, p 301.

40. Msgr State/AID/DOD [USIA] to CINCPAC, subj: 5-Year Emphasis on Civic Action, Jun 11, 1966.

41. Msg, Gen McConnell, AFCCS, to CINCPACAF, 81554, Jul 14, 1966.

42. Ibid.

43. Ltr, Lt Gen William W. Momyer, Comdr, 7th AF, to all 7th AF Wings and Groups, subj: Seventh Air Force Civic Action Program, Oct 8, 1966.

44. Command Correspondence Staff Summary Sheet, 7th AF, Seventh Air Force Civic Action Status Report for September 1966, Oct 7, 1966; minutes, 7th AF Civic Action Council Meeting, Nov 10, 1966; ltr, Brig Gen Louis Seith, Chief of Staff, 7th AF, to All 7AF Civic Action Council Members, subj: Exchange of Civic Action Ideas, Apr 3, 1967.

45. Minutes, 7th AF Civic Action Council Meeting, Dec 16, 1966.

46. Hist, USMACV, 1966, p 579.

47. 7th AF notebook, Seventh Air Force Civic Action Program, Oct 66.

48. PACAF COIN LL 25, Appropriate Fund for Civic Action Projects, Jun 29, 1966.

49. MACV Directive 37-13, Financial Administration US/FWMAF Civic Action Psychological Warfare Fund, Jun 15.
50. The size of the grant was based on the military population at each base. It was estimated that Tan Son Nhut had 10,000 personnel, while those bases receiving 100,000 piasters had only 5,000. Staff Summary Sheet, 7th AF (Prepared by Col James J. Lannon, Asst DCS/Plans), subj: Application for 7th Air Force Civic Action Funds, Sep 22, 1966.
51. Ltr, Brig Gen Franklin A. Nichols, to 3TFW, et al, subj: Application for Civic Action Funds, Sep 26, 1966.
52. The Vietnamese government had some supplies available for civic action work, although many of their reserves were furnished by the U.S. Agency or International Development. Government support for projects were usually restricted to joint U.S.-Vietnamese government projects or solely to Vietnamese government undertakings that were designed to further the country's revolutionary development goals.
53. MACV Directive 37-13, Financial Administration US/FWMAF Civic Action Psychological Warfare Fund, Jun 15, 1966; memo, Maj G. B. Conner, DPL, 7th AF, to Lt Gen W. W. Mommyer, Comdr, 7th AF, subj: Application for 7th Air Force Civic Action Funds, Sep 22, 1966.
54. Staff Summary Sheet, 7th AF (prepared by Maj Gerald B. Conner, DPLP-PL), subj: Civic Action Fund Expenditure, Aug 23, 1966.
55. Minutes, Seventh Air Force Civic Action Council Meeting, Jan 16, 1967. Management of the fund fell under the control of the base Civic Action Council which had been established by this time.
56. 7AFR 28-1, Civic Action Program, Aug 1, 1968.
57. 7th AF notebook, Seventh Air Force Civic Action Program, Oct 66.
58. International voluntary agencies included Catholic Relief Services, CARE, Lutheran World Relief, Dooley Foundation, American Friends Service Committee, and many others. See listing in 7th AF notebook, Seventh Air Force Civic Action Program, Oct 66.
59. 7th AF notebook, Seventh Air Force Civic Action Program, Oct 66; hist, USMACV, 1966, p 579; ltr, MACV to Subordinate Commands, subj: Supplies for US/FWMAF and RVNAF Military Civic Action, Jan 27, 1967; Casper Nannes, "Chaplains and Men Fight Other War," Washington Star, Oct 21, 1967.
60. Ltr, AFXPDO to MAC(MABDAXM), subj: Air Force Civic Action Report, Aug 16, 1967.
61. Ltr, Col Jack W. Hayes, Chief of Staff, 7th A-FF subj: Air Force Civic Action Program, Jun 14, 1966.
62. Msg 92740, AFXPDO to MAC(MABDAXM), subj: Air Force Civic Action Report, Nov 25, 1966.
63. 7th AF notebook, Seventh Air Force Civic Action Program, Oct 66.
64. Hist, Dir/Plans, USAF, Jan 1-Jun 30, 1966, Vol 30, p 301-2.
65. Ltr, AFXPD to AFXDC, subj: Civic Action Reports, Jun 8, 1966; 7th AF notebook Seventh Air Force Civic Action Program, Oct 66.
66. Ltr, AFXPDRP to AFXDC (Gen Martin), subj: Civic Action Report, Mar 27, 1967.
67. Counterinsurgency Bluebook, Fiscal Year 1966, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Nov 15, 1966, p 289.
68. Background Paper, RAND Representative, Dir/Plans, USAF, Psychological Operations and Civic Action Study (Project Coronet Pocadot), n.d. [ca. Jul 67]; msg,

- CSAF to TAC, et al. subj: Psychological Operations—Civic Action Training, Jul 7, 1967.
69. Ltr, AFXDC to DAFIE, subj: Civic Action Training Material, Jan 10, 1966.
70. Hist, AFGP-DAS 66-66, Jul 1966, p 15.
71. 7AFR 190-1. subj: 7th Air Force Civic Action Program, Jun 23, 1966.
72. Ltr, Lt Gen W. W. Momyer, Comdr, 7AF, to 3TFW, et al, subj: Seventh Air Force Civic Action Program, Oct 8, 1966.
73. Hist, AFGP-DAS 66-66, Jul 1966, p 21.
74. Minutes, 7th AF Civic Action Council Meeting, Nov 10, 1966; ltr, Brig Gen Franklin A. Nichols, Chief of Staff, 7th AF, to PACAF (DPLPC), subj: Air Force Civic Action Report, Oct 6, 1966.
75. 7AFR 190-3, Civic Action Councils, Oct 66; minutes, 7th AF Civic Action Council Meeting, Nov 10, 1966; 7AFR 28-2, Civic Action Program, Mar 67.
76. Minutes, 7th AF Civic Action Council Meeting, Nov 10, 1966, The Seventh Air Force Civic Action Council included the Chief of Staff, who served as Chairman, and representatives from Operations, Plans, Personnel, Intelligence, Materiel, Chaplain, Comptroller, Surgeon, Civil Engineer, Information, 600th Photo Squadron, Judge Advocate, AF Advisory Group, and the 834th Air Division. Councils at base level included in their membership representatives of the parent Air Force tactical air wing, Air Force Advisory Team, if present, and at least these staff agencies: Plans, Operations, Information, Comptroller, Intelligence, Civil Engineer, Surgeon, Chaplain, and Judge Advocate. See 7AFR 28-2, subj: Civic Action Program, Mar 67.
77. Command Correspondence Staff Summary Sheet, 7th AF, Staff Participation in 7th AF Civic Action Program, Nov 8, 1966.
78. AFR 190-1, Seventh Air Force Civic Action Program, Oct 66; Command Correspondence Staff Summary Sheet, Seventh Air Force Civic Action Status Report for September 1966, Oct 7, 1966.
79. At Da Nang, the Wing Commander requested that the mission be assigned to the Wing Staff. At Nha Trang a similar but informal assignment took place so that the Commander could insure greater support for the program.
80. Command Correspondence Staff Summary Sheet, 7th AF, Staff Participation in 7AF Civic Action Program, Nov 8, 1966.
81. Minutes, 7th AF Civic Action Council Meeting, Nov 10, 1966.
82. 7AFR 28-3, Seventh Air Force Civic Action Award, Dec 15, 1966.
83. Working Folder, MGT 6, "Civic Action Award," DPLG (Civic Action), Nov 22, 1966; minutes, 7th AF Civic Action Council Meeting, Dec 16, 1966.
84. Command Correspondence Staff Summary Sheet, 7th AF, Seventh Air Force Civic Action Status Report for October 1966, Nov 2, 1966.
85. Minutes, 7th AF Civic Action Council Meeting, Dec 16, 1966.
86. Minutes, 7th AF Civic Action Council Meeting, Jan 16, 1967.
87. Memo, DPL to 13 OMO, subj: manning of PACAF Civic Action Program, Jul 17, 1967.
88. Minutes, 7th AF Civic Action Council Meeting, Dec 16, 1966; USAF Military Civic Action Semiannual Report (DCS/Plans and Operations, USAF, Oct 68), p 24.
89. Minutes, 7th AF Civic Action Council Meeting, Nov 10, 1966; ltr 7th AF to PACAF, subj: Air Force Civic Action Report, Jan 11, 1967; Civic Action Newsletter, 7th AF, Dec 26, 1967.
90. Minutes, 7th AF Civic Action Council Meeting, Jan 16, 1967.

91. Ltr, Brig Gen Franklin A. Nichols, Chief of Staff, 7th AF, to Comdr TNU-MACVR subj: Request for Special Mission Airlift, Sep 24, 1966; memo, Maj Gerald B. Connor, PLPT 7th AF, to Lt Gen W. We Momyer Comdr, 7th AF, subj: Seventh Air Force Civic Action Status Report for September 1966, Oct 7, 1966.
92. Minutes, 7th AF Civic Action Council Meeting, Jan 16, 1967; ltr, 7th AF (DPLG) to PACAF (DPLPC), subj: Air Force Civic Action Report, Apr 1, 1967.
93. Minutes, 7th AF Civic Action Council Meeting, Jan 16, 1967 and Mar 3, 1967.
94. USAF Civic Action Report, AFXPDR, Oct-Dec 1966; ltr, AFXPDRP to AFXDC (Gen Martin), Subj: Civic Action Report, Mar 27, 1967.
95. Minutes, 7th AF Civic Action Council Meeting, Apr 14, 1967.
96. Ltr, AFXPDRP to AFXDC (Gen Martin)r subj: Civic Action Report, Mar 27, 1967.
97. Report, 7th AF, Air Force Civic Action Report Jan 11, 1967; Apr 1, 1967.
98. Report, 7th AF, Air Force Civic Action Report Jul 2, 1967.
99. Minutes, 7th AF Civic Action Council Meeting, Nov 10, 1966.
100. Memo, Leis W. Alvarez, Chairman, DDR&E Limited War Panel, for Director, Defense Research and Engineering, subj: Report of DDR&E Panel on Limited War, Nov 9, 1961.
101. Ltr, AFYPDRP to AFXDC (Gen Martin), subj: Civic Action Report, Mar 27, 1967.
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CHAPTER V

THE TET OFFENSIVE AND OPERATION RECOVERY

Seventh Air Force has never had an opportunity like the present to step into the breach and support the South Vietnamese Government program for recovery from the Viet Cong Tet Offensive.... Support of the recovery program is a command mission and will receive the priority needed to insure success at all Seventh Air Force bases.

—General William W. Momyer¹

The year 1968 began on a hopeful note for Air Force personnel engaged in civic actions in Vietnam. While the enemy's strength had not declined, General Westmoreland pointed out in his year-end assessment that militarily the Viet Cong were becoming less effective and losing control pointed out in his year-end assessment that militarily the Viet Cong were becoming less effective and losing control over vast amounts of territory. The South Vietnamese, on the other hand, were daily becoming more adept at fighting their own battles. This "friendly picture," the Commander noted, "gives rise to optimism for increased success in 1962."² All in all prospects looked good for a major reduction in the tempo of U.S. combat activities and an increase in those of the South Vietnamese.³

In the political field, U.S. Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker reported that great strides had been made there as well.⁴ And Deputy Ambassador Robert Komer, chief of the pacification program, painted an equally bright future for the civil side of the war and the battle for loyalties of the South Vietnamese masses. At a news conference in Saigon, he remarked that "we begin '68 in a better position than we have ever been before," citing only Vietnamese leadership as a major block to complete victory.⁵

Contributing to the optimism was the growing maturity of the Seventh Air Force civic action program. During 1966 and 1967 the nation-building effort had expanded significantly. Full-time, primary-duty personnel had been assigned to Air Force headquarters in Vietnam and to each of the country's air bases where U.S. Air Force units were stationed. Funds had been approved specifically for projects in support of economic and social development. The new perimeter hamlet program was beginning to evoke a positive response from people living adjacent to air bases. Several bases had formed civic action technical assistance teams to furnish advice, guidance, and training to local hamlets on civic action projects. And the air bases had established close communication with officials of the Vietnamese government's revolutionary development program and American civilians working toward the same goals. This assured continuity in the various projects, helped decrease duplication, and, most important, stimulated a marked increase of interest in self-improvement by the local people. As participation by Vietnamese civilians and military personnel grew, instances of unilateral civic actions by U.S. Air Force personnel dropped sharply. This involvement of the population in developmental activities was a key objective of the revolutionary development program and contributed to the feeling, widely shared as the year 1968 began, that a workable solution to the problem of pacification had at last been found.⁶

These hopes were suddenly dashed, however, when the Viet Cong launched devastating attacks against heavily populated urban centers and pacification forces in the surrounding countryside. With the offensive occurring during the traditional week-long holiday truce in, observance of the Vietnamese Lunar New Year (Tet), Americans and South Vietnamese alike were caught off guard and thrown into confusion by the massive assaults. Fighting began early in the morning of January 30, the most sacred period of the whole season. Within the first thirty-six hours of action, the Viet Cong had attacked the densely populated centers of Da Nang, Hue, and Saigon. And before the major assaults ended, the enemy had hit thirty-four of the country's forty-four provincial capitals, sixty-four district towns, and most of the South Vietnamese military installations. Included in the total were twelve major U.S.-Vietnamese air bases.

Although many provincial capitals, district towns, and airfields had been attacked in the past, the number latest strikes over such a short period of time were unprecedented. In the Saigon area alone, multi-pronged attacks were mounted against the city itself, simultaneously with strikes on Tan Son Nhut and Bien Hoa airfields. The other eight Seventh Air Force bases and their environs experienced similar assaults and equally heavy damage. After each, the onslaught was unanticipated—though it had been predicted. Being inadequately protected, these installations and their aircraft were particularly vulnerable to sabotage and mortar attack. Before the offensive had ended, more than a thousand aircraft of all the services and numerous shops and other maintenance facilities were damaged or completely destroyed.⁷

During the first week of February, the communists continued their attack throughout the South, blatantly announcing their intentions, of overthrowing the Thieu-Ky regime, rallying the entire country to their cause, and driving out the Americans. The presidential palace, the compound of the new American embassy (though not the building itself), and other sections of Saigon were penetrated and held by the assailants for a short while before order could be restored. Hue remained captive for almost a month before the invaders could be rooted out. The enemy challenged governmental control and influence in numerous other places as well. Throughout South Vietnam, public services ground to a halt as terrorist squads roamed the countryside, conducted house-to-house searches, burned and pillaged at random, and either kidnapped or assassinated key administrative and religious leaders. Before the onslaught could be contained, at least \$20 million worth of damage had been done to industrial and commercial enterprises and thousands of innocent people had been killed or injured. Many more were left homeless.⁸

The immediate reports which flowed back to the United States seemed to validate communist claims of a major military victory. Never before had the enemy demonstrated such boldness in challenging the very source of South Vietnamese power and authority. The administration in Washington was shocked by the enemy's strength; the American public felt betrayed by civilian and military officials who had been reporting steady progress over the past three years and who had just days before predicted success in only a short time. The barrage of words and pictures that was broadcast by the national communications media inundated the United States in a wave of pessimism that bordered on defeatism.⁹

Subsequent, more detailed reviews, however, revealed that the offensive had not been as successful as previously thought. In fact, most American commanders

eventually judged it a costly failure which achieved none of its military objectives. The South Vietnamese population as a whole did not give significant support to the communists, and the enemy did not achieve its confidently anticipated "general uprising." Even in Hue, where there was a positive response to the Viet Cong attack from some extreme Buddhists, the bulk of the population held back from committing themselves to the insurgency.¹⁰ Moreover, no military units defected. After the initial shock had worn off, allied forces fought well, driving communist guerrillas from their urban strongholds and inflicting heavy casualties on the assailants.¹¹ And throughout the crisis, the government remained intact and continued to function. Nevertheless, there was considerable debate for some time over the relative success of the offensive, the extent of the damage inflicted on the South, and the best means of forestalling a repetitive performance on the part of the Viet Cong.¹²

Much of the debate centered on the impact of the offensive on the national pacification program. Henry Kissinger, one of the more pessimistic critics, for example, assessed the achievements of the offensive in this area as a political and psychological setback for the United States and South Vietnam roughly equivalent to the military defeat suffered by the Vietnamese communists.¹³ After all the facts were in, however, the Tet offensive was shown to have enjoyed only limited success here too, having only halted the momentum of pacification and set progress back several months. Nonetheless, at the time the assaults were in progress and shortly thereafter, it did seem the communists had scored a stunning victory against pacification and that they had dealt it a serious blow. And because the civic action program was an important component of the South Vietnamese revolutionary development effort, there were many who for a time had serious doubts about the ability of this allied program to weather the crisis as well.¹⁴

The Viet Cong assaults appeared to represent a political and psychological defeat for a number of reasons. Probably the most important occurred when the South Vietnamese government, in effect, abandoned its own countryside where the job of nation-building had been showing steady improvement. To some observers, this was the most disturbing result of the offensive and basically more damaging than the destruction in the cities.¹⁵ When the urban areas came under attack the government immediately called in reinforcements from all available sources to defend the embattled towns, guard against renewed Viet Cong violence, and aid in urban recovery efforts. This regrouping involved a considerable portion of the more than 400 South Vietnamese revolutionary development teams and a majority of the fifty-four security battalions assigned to protect these workers.¹⁶ It also involved large numbers of U.S. troops previously engaged in civic action and pacification. On February 4, for example, General Westmoreland directed all American agencies and military units to provide "active and immediate support" to the besieged cities.¹⁷ Air Force civic action personnel were among those called into action. As a result, work on social and economic programs in the hamlets was suspended. "Many previously planned projects had to be cancelled and a great many others could be only partially implemented."¹⁸ Moreover, many of the already pacified hamlets became vulnerable to concentrated Viet Cong retaliation. By deserting its people, authorities in Saigon seemed to undercut the rationale for the whole pacification/civic action concept—that of getting the peasant to trust in and depend on his government.

The government's retreat from the hamlets was nevertheless, justifiable and was supported by most U.S. military leaders.¹⁹ Critics admitted that military

commanders faced a real dilemma. On the one hand, they had to act to alleviate the widespread urban suffering and to prove to the urbanites that the government could "perform." Yet the farming areas embraced more than ninety percent of the country's population and would certainly suffer from any major diversion of manpower or resources. After carefully considering the alternatives however, officials in Saigon chose to respond to the crisis in the cities. Because of this decision, the communists were able to score several points against the allies and set back the progress of revolutionary development.

The chief reason for the communists' short-term success centered on the question of security. Military security had always been regarded as indispensable to winning rural support.²⁰ Without security, it was impossible to operate efficient programs, to develop indigenous leadership, or to sustain local government workers in the countryside. Most important, a lack of security caused a lack of belief in and support for the central government. If the people feared Viet Cong retaliation, they would, at best, take a neutral stand between the two opposing sides. At worst, they would seek rapport with the enemy. Such fear had hamstrung cooperation for years. A hamlet or village could be classified as "secure" and the foundations laid for civic development, but it often took only one warning or act of reprisal from the Viet Cong for the government to lose its initiative completely. It became even more dangerous and costly for a peasant to commit himself explicitly to the government's cause if he had no guarantee that police forces would be permanently stationed in his locale.²¹

Thus, even though the consequences of the government's reaction to Tet were not as disastrous as they might have been, the government's abandonment of the countryside, together with the large-scale enemy attacks, cast serious doubts on the ability of the Saigon regime to provide adequate protection for its citizenry. The extent of the psychological damage caused by these doubts was difficult to measure with accuracy, but the rural inhabitant in many places was doubtlessly left with the impression that his government considered him less a citizen than his urban counterpart. In addition, the residents of many hamlets had by this time lived through a number of ill-fated, short-lived developmental programs. This latest retrenchment reinforced the belief field some that the government did not possess enough stamina to make pacification really work.²²

Thus, as the full impact of the events of Tet 1968 began to take effect, popular confidence among the population as a whole—in the cities as well as in the countryside—began to dwindle.²³ Even the government's own civic teams were understandably reluctant to work, in unpatrolled regions. Before the major communist assaults began, protection had often been light in some areas and civic workers had dared not sleep in the hamlets to which they were assigned. After the urban attacks started in earnest, and rural policemen were relocated to the cities, it became dangerous for civic development teams to perform their duties. Fighting was so intense around Seventh Air Force installations, for instance, base commanders were reluctant to allow their men to engage in voluntary activities off base. And many of the few remaining South Vietnamese pacification cadres who were expected to remain on the job were recorded to have deserted rather than face what they felt would be certain death at the hands of the Viet Cong. More than half simply disappeared. Provincial chiefs assigned others to security duty in particularly desperate areas. This proved a feeble and inadequate solution since most pacification workers were only lightly armed and trained largely for self-protection.²⁴

Given a situation, then, in which population was left with virtually no security, it became relatively easy for the Viet Cong to step in and take over. Many local and regional civil servants were abducted or executed and civil administrative severely. Large blocks of territory were simply overrun with scarcely a skirmish, and about a million South Vietnamese fell under direct communist control. About the same number were left without any governmental leadership at all. The attackers destroyed roads and severed telephone lines. In many areas, communication between the government and the hamlets was cut off completely. According to conservative figures provided by the Military Assistance Command, the population living in relatively secured areas dropped from 67.2 percent in January to 59.8 percent in February, erasing all the gains made during the entire year of 1967.²⁵ The situation in many areas was unknown for several weeks. In these, police protection was so spotty that governmental representatives and hamlet chiefs alike refused to inspect them.

Throughout rural South Vietnam normal social and economic life was also disrupted. Transportation of food and other essentials, except by the military, was sporadic. Shortages and curfews produced high prices and enormous suffering. Rice, oil, and vegetable prices, for example, sometimes doubled in a day.²⁶ Hence, the irony of the communist offensive was that while the towns took almost all the punishment in the major attacks, it was in the countryside that the more lasting political and psychological damage occurred. The analytical staff at the American embassy later suggested that while the maximum communist military and political objective had been complete victory and the takeover of the entire country, the minimum objective may have been to consolidate their control over the countryside and to demonstrate that no area in South Vietnam was completely safe from communist activity.²⁷ This the Viet Cong certainly accomplished—at least for a short while.²⁸

While the decline in rural security and the curtailment of the civil and developmental aspects of the pacification program weakened the government's hold on the population, a third factor contributed as well to Saigon's loss of influence and political support among its rural population. The problem of maintaining popular allegiance as a result of wartime accidents has been discussed earlier (See Chapter IV). During the Tet offensive, however, allied air strikes and various other forms of military action were deliberately directed at urban localities irrespective of their large civilian populations.²⁹

Allied forces found it necessary to resort to these measures as the only economical means available to ferret out the Viet Cong from areas in which they were tightly entrenched occupation of towns, villages, and hamlets, with their concrete buildings and often elaborate bomb shelters and tunnels, together with the friendly treatment accorded them by some South Vietnamese, enabled that Viet Cong to establish practically impregnable defenses. It would have been almost impossible to dislodge the guerrillas from such strongholds by house-to-house fighting rifles. Moreover, reliance solely upon such operations would have produced heavier military casualties than the Saigon government was willing to sanction.

A resort to air power thus seemed to be the only feasible means of retaking Viet Cong-held territory. But this recourse also had its shortcomings. While aerial bombardment could effectively destroy buildings and other of the Viet Cong's hiding places, there was a tendency not to use it selectively. The fact that the enemy was often indistinguishable from non-combatants also seriously complicated the government's efforts to reestablish control without alienating the very people whose

support it depended on to win the War. In several recorded instances, whole sections of towns and hamlets had to be completely destroyed. Civilian casualties were usually numerous. Parts of Hue and Dalat, for example, came under especially heavy fire.³⁰ And the provincial capital of Ben Tre in the Mekong Delta was completely razed in the attempt to recapture it. Repeated bombings over a fifty-hour period killed roughly 1,000 civilians and wounded another 1,500 out of a total population of 50,000. An estimated 5,000 homes were destroyed, and more than 30,000 refugees fled the town. In a much publicized statement, one American major explained to an Associated Press reporter the reason, in his view, for the appalling destruction "it became, necessary to destroy the town to save it."³¹

Such incidents—infrequent as they were—gave credence to the argument that the governments of the United States and South Vietnam were not willing to accept short-term military disadvantages in order to pursue the long-term political goals needed to win the pacification battle. Recognizing this tendency and discussing its effect on U.S.-aided villages, another U.S. military officer remarked: "This is our rural developments program—build 'em, then burn 'em."³²

Nor did the irony associated with not using firepower selectively escape the attention of communist propagandists. Examples of allied destructiveness such as that which occurred at Ben Tre were used not only to incite anti-American sentiment but also to argue that the South Vietnamese-American civil development program was a sham. How could a government truly interested in the welfare of its people commit such atrocities and slaughter so many defenseless people? Such arguments probably won some supporters among those South Vietnamese who suffered most from the bombings and certainly also made it more difficult for civic action workers to face survivors of destroyed villages.³³ Yet, had the enemy been blameless in their treatment of non-combatants, these arguments would have won many more converts.

As it turned out, the Viet Cong were much more destructive during their offensive than the allies. The burning of whole communities was a common practice, and on several occasions the communists engaged in large-scale executions. At Hue, North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces murdered more than 1,000 government employees, school teachers, priests, and women.³⁴ A total of nineteen mass graves were unearthed, and autopsies revealed that many victims had been beaten to death, shot, or beheaded. The condition of nearly half the dead indicated that they had been buried alive. There was also evidence that many others had been executed simply as a public example.³⁵ At Tan Uyen—the site near Bien Hoa of an inadvertent American bombing in 1966 (see Chapter IV), about 700 Viet Cong overran the town, burned 110 homes, terrorized the population, and escaped without any known casualties.³⁶

There were also numerous reports of the Viet Cong using civilians as shields during their attacks, especially in the Delta. In their February 10 attack on Bac Lieu, for example, they used ninety-five women and children for protection. The Viet Cong also repeatedly used hospitals, schools, and places of worship as standpoints from which to mount assaults. On March 5, they attacked a hospital run by an American female doctor on the outskirts of Kontum City, destroyed its operating room, killed and wounded several patients and abducted a German nurse.³⁷

Because of the resentment generated by these and numerous other terrorist activities, many South Vietnamese officials and U.S. advisory personnel became convinced that public opinion in Vietnam was actually hardened against the communist guerrillas.³⁸ Probably the net result of atrocities committed by both sides, however,

was that the South Vietnamese citizenry became even more reluctant to give meaningful support to either. And in the long run, this neutralist attitude played into the hands of the communists. As Mao had emphasized many times before, a neutral stand by a majority of the population was all that insurgents needed for victory in a guerrilla war.

By demonstrating and reinforcing, then, the great extent of non-commitment among the South Vietnamese, the communist offensive pointed out more clearly than before the military importance of pacification and rural development. Before the constructive work of nation-building could be resumed and stepped-up, however, the immediate task of reconstruction had to be undertaken.³⁹ The hundreds of thousands of refugees generated by the fighting had to be fed, clothed, and housed. War-ravaged areas and civic structures had to be rebuilt. Basic governmental services had to be re-established. Security in the hamlets and villages had to be increased. And, most important, lost morale and confidence had to be restored.

To accomplish, these objectives, the focus of the military's civic efforts had to be shifted from long-range, self-help projects to short-term (and often unilateral) humanitarian Services and basic civil recovery operations. The supreme test for the civic centered how well this could be accomplished without losing all its pre-Tet momentum and undercutting its previous policy of having the Vietnamese people participate in accomplishing their own social welfare goals. The basic test for the government, on the other hand, was how fast it could restore order in the cities and then get its civic workers back to their jobs in the countryside.⁴⁰

Initially it appeared that the government would fail to meet the demands of the situation. Shocked by the assaults and knocked off-balance, the South Vietnamese were slow to respond in such immediately critical areas as the distribution of food and the provision of relief for refugees. In an attempt to cut through Saigon's red tape, the American mission suggested the formation of a central recovery committee that could give quick help to the Tet victims. Several days later, President Thieu agreed to the idea and named Vice President Ky as chairman. The committee's major effort, Operation Recovery, was responsible not only for providing care for the homeless and food for the populace, but for restoring order and security, assisting in rebuilding damaged population centers, and organizing self-defense groups at the local level.⁴¹ On the same day that the recovery effort got started, General Westmoreland dispatched his request that all American agencies and military units support the Vietnamese government's efforts to the fullest.⁴² And a special task force headed by Ambassador Komer was given authority to direct and coordinate all American activities in support of the Vietnamese committee.⁴³

On February 8, in response, to Westmoreland's request, General Momyer made the job of recovery a top priority mission of the Seventh Air Force. He directed all Air Force units to provide immediate support to the government's program.⁴⁴ A few days later he also asked each subordinate commander to give civic recovery his "personal attention," adding that "all elements of the Seventh Air Force staff will support your efforts."⁴⁵

To eliminate duplication in the activities undertaken and to insure that Air Force services would be utilized at the provincial level (an area previously considered outside the purview of Air Force civic activities), Momyer asked each commander to appoint a liaison officer to work with the Military Assistance Command's senior advisor in each province. No project, except under critically urgent circumstances,

would be accepted until such coordination had been effected. This action was absolutely necessary because in his position as personal counselor to the province chief, the provincial advisor (usually an Army officer) had primary responsibility for the U.S. role in the recovery program. The advisor, together with the province, chief, decided which projects were needed and their established priorities and allocated the resources. Any activity the Air Force undertook outside the area assigned to it around each of its air bases would serve to support these basic decisions made by Army and South Vietnamese provincial personnel. Momyer, nevertheless, emphasized that initially he wanted airmen to help individual victims of the Viet Cong attacks, but that after these had been cared for, Air Force units should concentrate on projects of a longer lasting nature such as water wells, medical aid stations, market places, and permanent housing.⁴⁶ The nature of the crisis insured that these desires would be carried out.

Funding of the Tet recovery projects was also of immediate concern to Seventh Air Force Personnel. Many of the early undertakings fell into the category of emergency assistance. Consequently, the quantity of money and resources, and the speed at which they could be made available, often spelled the difference between success and failure. Airmen participated on many projects sponsored by the Military Assistance Command. Resources for these were abundant, and the Air Force had only to provide its share of the requested skills and manpower. When Air Force funds were called upon, their use was usually supplementary in nature and put no great strain upon Air Force financial reserves. On many other occasions, however, the Air Force worked independently of the other military services and had to make its own provisions for resources as well as funds. In most of these cases, the money allocated to each base for routine civic action projects was not sufficient.

Momyer anticipated these requirements for the first time made appropriated funds available for civic activities. For the remainder of Fiscal year 1968, the Seventh Air Force was authorized a total of \$426,000 for civic action, in addition to the other funds previously approved for the program. From this general allocation, \$25,000 was given to each base to promote recovery in its environs. A reserve of \$168,000 was held for use on high priority projects or at bases with excessive needs.⁴⁷

In addition, these officially authorized funds were to be supplemented with donations from American and Vietnamese servicemen. Early in February, the Seventh Air Force organized a low-pressure fund drive called "7AF Blue" at each of its bases. The campaign was already underway and experiencing considerable success when General Westmoreland preempted the Air Force's program with his own Tet Aggression Relief Project to collect contributions from personnel throughout the command. But the funds collected by the Seventh Air Force were, nonetheless, allowed to remain at each base to finance locally conceived projects. Both Vietnamese and American airmen responded to the campaign, contributing more than \$25,000. In addition to increasing Air Force resources for civic action, the fund drive also provided a bonus of much-needed publicity for what was still largely an unknown and unappreciated function of the Air Force.⁴⁸

Along with increasing monetary support for civic action, Seventh Air Force headquarters also outlined new, simplified procedures for requesting these funds and controlling their use. Prior to the communist offensive the civic action organization at Tan Son Nhut had approved practically all Seventh Air Force-funded projects. Those costing less than \$500 had been submitted to the headquarters Civic Action Division,

while requests of \$500 or more had required Council approval. The numerous requests for funds which flooded headquarters following the Tet assaults, however, threatened to bottleneck the whole process and severely hamper the Air Force's response. To permit Air Force units to react as rapidly as possible to the crisis, the Seventh Air Force command decided, therefore, to allow base commanders themselves to approve requests for projects costing up to \$3,000, if they had been properly coordinated with the province's senior advisor. Requests for more than this sum usually required subsidization by the South Vietnamese government the Military Assistance Command, or the U.S. government's civilian relief agency in Vietnam. As a result, civic action officials at Tan Son Nhut retained the right to approve or reject these larger projects.⁴⁹

Once an Air Force unit had secured approval and funds for project, it could requisition supplies and equipment directly from the base supply officer. This new procedure required that civic action be recognized as an officially approved and funded base organization with an assigned organizational code.⁵⁰ Not only did the code simplify the accounting process and guarantee that base supply would be reimbursed Keith the money appropriated for civic action, but the accompanying recognition helped to elevate the status of civic activities to the position previously enjoyed only by base organizations thought to support the war effort more directly.

In addition to making new funding arrangements for civic activities following the Tet campaign, the Seventh Air Force also found it necessary to change reporting procedures. The tremendous increase in civic action encouraged more frequent reports than the monthly requirement previously levied on all base civic action offices. Moreover, military leaders began to attach more importance to civic action. The speed at which South Vietnamese recovered from the communist attacks was used as the basis for judging the course of the offensive, so field commanders and key staff personnel requested up-to-date progress reports every few days. To meet these demands, Civic Action Division implemented an experimental telephonic survey and reporting system. Each base was now required to make a bi-weekly report by telephone to Seventh Air Force headquarters on the types and number of all projects initiated and completed since the last report, the scope of each, the resources used, and the unit or units responsible for supervising and completing the task.⁵¹ The Civic Action Division then consolidated these reports into a weekly 7AF Civic Action News Bulletin which summarized base's accomplishments and provided an overall picture of the command's recovery efforts. The bulletins were then distributed to field commanders and the Seventh Air Force staff. Each base also received copies, allowing, it to compare its level of productivity with that of other air bases.⁵²

While the news bulletins were published as schedule, the reports on which they were based were not as complete or as detailed as originally planned. Many base civic action officers experienced difficulty getting both detailed and timely information from district and provincial officials. As a result, some reports contained only generalized statements which lacked much pertinent information which could have helped commanders formulate a better-advanced program.⁵³

Moreover, the telephonic reporting system was never successful. The offensive disrupted almost all channels of communication, including electronic means. Telephone lines which were not made completely inoperative by the attacks frequently became overloaded. In many areas the government was forced to minimize use of the telephone for routine communications. Faced with these restrictions, many base civic action offices found it impossible to reach Saigon. Oral contact was not established

with Da Nang, Nha Trang, Phan Rang, and Tuy Hoa, for example, until February 19. With telephone conversations thus limited, some civic action officers had to send follow-up letters to Tan Son Nhut with the requested information. These were often hurriedly drafted and lacked many specifics. Nevertheless, the reports proved extremely helpful in setting priorities for the civil recovery effort and for assessing its progress and failures.⁵⁴

By calling for more frequent reports, obtaining appropriated funds for civil relief projects, and making it easier to requisition supplies, General Momyer and others at Seventh Air Force headquarters demonstrated their support for the national recovery program. And these new arrangements, together with the already-established Seventh Air Force civic action organization provided a command-wide network for coordinating rehabilitation projects and insuring an efficient response to the crisis. These basic recovery activities dominated the Air Force's civic program until June, 1968, when the nation's recovery was finally assessed as complete.

The earliest reports from practically all Seventh Air Force bases pointed the need for providing emergency relief to the hundreds of thousands of refugees made homeless by the sudden destruction of the Viet Cong onslaught. Official estimates showed the number of new refugees resulting from the attacks to exceed 500,000.

A U.S. Senate subcommittee headed by Edward M. Kennedy to investigate the plight of these people found, however, that the offensive itself, together with the United States and South Vietnamese air and artillery counterstrikes, had actually created approximately 700,000 new refugees. Further attacks by the Viet Cong in May pushed the total to more than a million. Many of these were homeless only temporarily, but it was estimated that almost 400,000 would require long-term assistance.⁵⁵

Proper concern and care for this vast group of displaced people was important not only for humanitarian reasons but for political purposes as well. Many of them had come from areas of strong Viet Cong activity and would probably return there or be resettled in areas still vulnerable to communist propaganda. Thus, the refugees represented a readily exploitable opportunity to increase popular support for the South Vietnamese government—by virtue of their numbers, their recognizable identity as a disadvantaged group, and most important, their family and village ties in contested and Viet Cong-held areas. But if the government's response were inadequate, the way would be open for the Viet Cong to reap the profits of official apathy. Senator Kennedy's investigating committee reached a similar conclusion: "The response of the, Government of South Vietnamese to these emergency needs will have a crucial impact on the future Government of that country."⁵⁶

The refugee problem was not a new one in South Vietnam, and the government theoretically should have been adequately prepared to handle it. Almost one million refugees left North for the South in the months following the partition of Vietnam by the Geneva Accords of July 1954. By 1957, the South Vietnamese, with American economic assistance, had completed the monumental task of caring for and largely integrating these displaced people into their society and economy. These northern evacuees were strongly anticommunist and contributed greatly to the country's military and civil programs. Diem could thus brag that "South Vietnam's No. 1 problem of 1954 had been turned into an asset by 1957."⁵⁷

In 1962 and 1963, the refugee problem again became acute when Viet Cong harassment and terrorism drove approximately 150,000 Montagnard tribesmen from

their mountain homes. These refugees were Southerners and were not motivated as clearly by political opposition to communism as were the refugees from North Vietnam in 1954 and 1955. But, significantly, they did choose to escape the war by moving to government rather than communist-controlled territory.

Responsibility for this new group of the war's victims fell upon civilian as well as military relief administrators.⁵⁸ Airdropping medical supplies and food, and transporting hundreds of these tribesmen to resettlement for instance, became a major military operation for U.S. and South Vietnamese Air Force personnel.⁵⁹ These efforts, the experience of the fifties, numerous military—directed self-help programs, and the untiring work of personnel from many American voluntary agencies paid off. By August 1964, most of the Montagnards were close to self-sufficient. A number of their young men even volunteered for service with the Vietnamese armed forces—an act of loyalty to Saigon which would have been unthinkable in an earlier period when these mountain tribes were very hostile toward the South Vietnamese.⁶⁰

By the conclusion of the Montagnard resettlement program in August, the refugee flow within South Vietnam had slowed to a trickle and the mass, involuntary improvement of people appeared no longer a problem. Within a very short time, however, the Viet Cong stepped up its pressure on the South. The United States responded by passing the Gulf of Tonkin resolution and increasing the tempo of the war. As a result the country was flooded with throngs of the hapless and homeless once again. Peasants from the war-torn Mekong Delta emigrated north, and people fleeing communist terrorism migrated south from the central highlands to Bien Hoa, Saigon, and other areas. By mid-1965, the problem had reached crisis proportions as the number of persons seeking refuge in more regions passed the half million mark.⁶¹

It was at this point that the U.S. Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Refugees and Escapees began its hearings on the issue after a preliminary investigation by the General Accounting Office revealed a serious lack of awareness on the part of U.S. and South Vietnamese officials as to the magnitude and possible political ramifications of the problem.⁶² Senator Kennedy's major contention, then, was that the needs of civilians had been subordinated to the military effort and that the war could not be won without more emphasis on the civilian front. The United States, for example, had almost no budget for refugees in fiscal year 1965.⁶³ Officials in the State Department placed almost all responsibility for aid and programs on the South Vietnamese themselves, and simply assumed that the refugees were being adequately cared for.⁶⁴ Likewise, the 700-man Vietnamese mission of the U.S. Agency for International Development did not have a single full-time person assigned to refugee affairs. One top official in the Agency actually testified, before the Senate subcommittee that "in effect we have no refugee problem as such."⁶⁵

A similar lack of concern—and even total disdain of the refugees in some cases—existed within the South Vietnamese government. Despite that country's previous experience with large numbers of uprooted people, there was no agency charged explicitly with their care, relief, and resettlement. Instead the refugee program was fragmented and responsibility was shared by a variety of different agencies. The Ministry of Welfare, for instance, was responsible for dispensing emergency assistance, whereas the Ministry of Rural Development made resettlement payments to the transients and evacuees.⁶⁶

Though the efforts and accomplishments of these organizations looked good on paper, in practice they were totally inadequate. Because it had conducted no official

surveys, the South Vietnamese government had no idea of the numbers of refugees within its borders, or their needs-much less a conception of the importance of relief programs in winning the war for the loyalty of this vast group of the people.⁶⁷ The prevailing opinion termed the refugee a burden rather than an opportunity and a responsibility. Moreover, the government feared that too much help for these people would result in a dependence on the dole and the creation of a permanent refugee class. "You can't give too much away to the refugees," South Vietnamese refugee commissioner Nguyen Phuc Que was quoted as saying, "or every Vietnamese will be turning himself in as a refugee."⁶⁸

Funds and resources within the Ministry of Rural Development were inadequate to begin with, but such beliefs and fears kept allowances purposefully low. When a refugee came into a government camp, he was entitled to only seven piasters a day (less than seven cents) for the first thirty days. Then he was put on his own, with a final lump-payment of 2,000 piasters (less than \$20) with which to build a new home. More often than not this latter payment was not made; but even if it were received, a peasant could not build a house for less than 6,000 to 10,000 piasters. Although most people involved in the program seemed to know that the refugee payments were too small, and were sustained for too short a time, little was done to change the situation. In many cases, appeals from provincial officials were never answered by the government in Saigon.⁶⁹

Early in 1966, in response to increasing pressure from the United States, the Vietnamese government created a special committee to administer to the refugees' needs. But after the first few months it had already fallen behind in its planned goals. Like many other governmental undertakings, this program suffered from a plethora of the usual South Vietnamese problems: poor logistical support, a shortage of experienced personnel, unavailability of secure sites for poor coordination between field and central offices, general lack of concern and motivation among provincial officials to tackle the problem, and rampant corruption and misuse of funds at all levels of the government.⁷⁰ It was not, uncommon for as much as seventy-five percent of the funds and supplies designated for refugee relief to be siphoned off before they reached the people. For example, in Pleiku, of 13,000 refugees whom the South Vietnamese government counted as resettled, 10,000 never received a single piaster of the resettlement allotment. Nonetheless, all were listed as having been paid off in full. No one was able to account for the money.⁷¹ In other instances, South Vietnamese relief workers sold refugees American-supplied food which they were supposed to give away free and reported delivery of commodities to non-existent refugees.⁷² Such blatant profiteering sabotaged the effectiveness of programs aimed at holding the people of South Vietnam and hindered efforts to gain popular support. Prompted by the South Vietnamese government's inactivity and almost total lack of concern for its displaced citizenry, the U.S. government stepped into the breach which preferably should have been filled by the Vietnamese themselves. As one observer put it:

In a country where we're finding it hard to control the population, we've got three quarters of a million refugees safely in our hands. Many of them have husbands and fathers fighting with the Viet Cong. But even so, we've got an opportunity to show them what the anti-Communist side can do for them. We ought not to let this opportunity go down the drain.⁷³

Still, by the time the United States chose to act, the dimensions of the problem ruled out everything but a stopgap effort. Feelings of bitterness and disillusionment among these uprooted people also limited the course of action. Instead of reeking the refugees' active support and allegiance, the United States had to settle on simply neutralizing their political response. Attitudinal surveys of many camps revealed that callous officials, poor living conditions, and actual hunger had already resulted in a partial disaffection away from the South Vietnamese government.⁷⁴ And the hostility in some camps made them fertile ground for Viet Cong recruitment and propaganda. While some camp inmates claimed that Viet Cong harassment had driven them from their homes, the majority faulted either U.S. military activities or Vietnamese government failures. "We and their government have deluded ourselves into thinking that so long as [the refugees] receive any help at all, we must be winning their hearts and minds," the Senate subcommittee on refugees concluded. "On the contrary, they tell whoever will listen that the assurances they have received from the Government of Vietnam have not been fulfilled."⁷⁵

Late in 1965, then, and throughout 1966 and 1967, the United States developed an ad hoc program designed to meet basic refugee requirements and to decrease feelings of despair and bitterness.⁷⁶ And as the number of refugees continued to mount so too did the U.S. input. From near zero in fiscal 1965, the U.S. budgetary allocation grew to, \$25 million in 1966 and to over \$30 million in 1967. A projected \$43 million expenditure was programmed for 1968—but this figure was set before Tet. From no civilian workers assigned exclusively to refugee work in the summer of 1965, the number of personnel stood at fifty-six by the close of 1967.⁷⁷

The U.S. Air Force input grew along with the U.S. government commitment. The first demand upon the service was for airlift.⁷⁸ When Viet Cong activity curtailed truck traffic or threatened refugee settlements, Air Force C-47s and C-123s were called in to ferry refugees from insecure zones to areas which could be more easily protected. Even so, many refugee camps were surrounded by communist-controlled territory, making travel to and from the sites extremely difficult and dangerous. These camps had to be supplied by air as well.⁷⁹ In at least one instance, an emergency airlift of blankets from the United States helped alleviate considerable suffering among refugees in the cooler provinces of Kontum and Pleiku.⁸⁰ The rapid build-up of American troops at this time caused a logistical tie-up on roads and at ports of both military and civilian supplies. Food, clothing, medicines, and other materials destined for refugee camps were held up in the overall tangle. Thus, even in secure areas, air transportation was often the only way that the Agency for International Development or voluntary agencies like CARE or the International Rescue Committee could receive supplies to continue their work.⁸¹

Special military civic action teams had also become involved with refugee work prior to the Tet offensive, and many experienced considerable success. As early as 1965, for example, a report filed by the American Council on Voluntary Agencies complimented U.S. military civic action units on their promptness in seeking out and caring for various groups of displaced people.⁸² Numerous refugee groups—some situated on the outskirts of Seventh Air Force bases—had known only a hand-to-mouth existence for years. Giving aid to these camps prime perimeter rehabilitation projects, and airmen gained experience in all phases of relief work: distributing food and clothing, constructing shelters and sanitation facilities, providing medical attention to the sick and injured, and quite often, making reparations for personal

losses.⁸³ The 4th Air Commando Squadron at Pleiku for example, became deeply involved with a nearby Vietnamese refugee center.⁸⁴ A medical civic action team from Bien Hoa's 3rd Tactical Fighter Wing made regular visits to a refugee camp in the city, while other volunteers constructed showers and latrines. A cultural civic action team, composed of Vietnamese airmen from the base, provided live entertainment and thereby gave the refugees some respite from the inevitable boredom of camp life.⁸⁵

Not wanting to encourage these people to depend solely on American aid or a government handout, however, Air Force civic action personnel sought also to teach principles of self-help and democracy. Many refugees had never experienced trust in civic leadership or had long forgotten the amenities of civil management, such as self-government or cooperation with neighbors to accomplish community goals. Civic action personnel therefore took the opportunity to teach these concepts and to encourage the refugees to solve their own problems through the community structure.

A particularly successful program for refugees was developed by Air Force personnel at Cam Ranh Bay. A refugee settlement consisting of thirty hamlets and a population of over 1,000 families was situated on the base's perimeter. Medical attention, in short supply at most camps, formed the core of the program. USAF doctors conducted medical and dental clinics on a regular basis, inspected food preparation techniques and water supply facilities, gave lectures and demonstrations on personal hygiene, and taught simple methods of controlling diseases and rodents. Other civic action personnel helped to implement self-help construction projects with surplus materials from the base. Emphasis was always placed on having the refugees do as much as possible for themselves. Cooperation obtained from local officials and U.S. Army senior advisors gave the entire effort a strong foundation and an aspect of permanence.⁸⁶

The Air Force group assigned to activate a new tactical fighter base at Phu Cat had almost free rein in its work with refugees, although many projects were supposedly conducted jointly with the Vietnamese government. While the air base was still under construction, 26,000 peasants, uprooted by fighting in the Phu Cat Mountains, were resettled in a refugee village close to the base. Their needs were many and immediate. No potable water was available for the first few days, so Air Force personnel volunteered to make daily deliveries until wells could be constructed. Food was in short supply also, but leftovers from the base's mess halls provided adequate supplementation three times a day. Personal donations of clothing and money from the men on 7 base met other needs. Although extremely busy building an airfield, civil engineers found time to draw up plans for permanent dwellings and other village structures for the destitute community. Air Force operators used the base's heavy equipment and their own free time to do the preliminary construction work. Scrap lumber was then trucked to the future homesites and volunteers showed the refugees how to build simple houses. By the time the air base was operational, the refugee settlement was well on its way toward self-sufficiency.⁸⁷

The situation was not as auspicious at the 400 or more other camps scattered over the Vietnamese countryside. Most could meet only minimal standards. In the northern provinces, starvation was a constant threat.⁸⁸ And the rapid escalation of the war continued to generate refugees faster than they could be resettled—some 40,000 a month by the summer of 1967. By the close of that year, official U.S. sources estimated that two million people—nearly one-eighth of the total South Vietnamese population—were currently in or lead passed through a government camp since 1963.⁸⁹

About an equal number were crowded into urban slums and squatter villages, having chosen not to ask for assistance; but these were never counted and their numbers did not show up in government statistics. Their needs were even greater than the official refugees since apathy and despair had forced them to lose all faith in receiving help from their government.⁹⁰ Following an investigation, the U.S. Government Accounting Office gave the following description:

As bad as the camp conditions we observed were, the living conditions of the unregistered refugees of the urban centers are often far worse. In the urban centers of Saigon, Da Nang, Quang Ngai and other coastal areas, it is possible to see a breakdown in the fabric of life in South Vietnamese that is appalling.

In large sections of Saigon, there are hundreds of thousands of people living in squalor, in subhuman conditions. They sleep in the alleys and in the streets, in courtyards and halls, even in graveyards and mausoleums where bodies have been removed to allow more room. Most have no work, the children run wild; there is little food, little to sustain them both physically and mentally. The areas they live in are breeding grounds, for disease and illness and for Vietcong recruitment.⁹¹

Some South Vietnamese and American officials often cited this vast influx of people as evidence that they were winning the psychological battle for popular support.⁹² But the situation was probably assessed more accurately by the American official who remarked: "The truth is, we are not offering these people any very good reason to switch sides."⁹³

Such was the situation, then, when the battles and bombardments of the Tet offensive opened the floodgates and refugees streamed into South Vietnam's provincial capitals and coastal cities. More than 250,000 took refuge in Saigon alone, Thousands congregated in settlements bordering on Seventh Air Force bases. There were 5,000 at Nha Trang, 6,000 at Phu Cat, 6,500 at Da Nang, 8,000 each at Bien Hoa and Tuy Hoa, 9,000 at Binh Thuy, and 35,000 at Tan Son Nhut.⁹⁴ The South Vietnamese had made preparations for 350,000 refugees for all of 1968—not the half million which were forced from their homes during a one month period. Facilities were jammed far beyond capacity; there was an urgent need for food, shelter, and supplies. Overloaded by such an increase in numbers and needs of refugees, Saigon's relief organization sputtered sluggishly.⁹⁵

YEAR	CUMULATIVE REFUGEES	TEMPORARY REFUGEES
Dec 31, 1965	735,858	453,667
Dec 31, 1966	1,678,089	809,456
Dec 31, 1967	2,114,197	793,944

Source: Findings and Recommendations of the Subcommittee to Investigate Problems Connected with Refugees and Escapees, Committee on the Judiciary, Senate, Civilian Casualty and Refugee Problems in South Vietnam, 90th Cong, 2d sess (Washington, 1968), p 4. These figures listed only the people officially registered in government camps. The Committee considered them extremely conservative and distorted in some cases.

Air bases also responded slowly at first to the demands of the situation.⁹⁶ The Air Force's initial concern was to augment base security, repair damaged facilities, and lend support to military efforts to stop the Viet Cong advance. Since all available personnel were pulled into these emergency activities, the number of volunteers available for relief work was sharply curtailed. This was especially true for civil engineers whose skills would have added significantly to the recovery effort.⁹⁷ At the same time the hiring and use of local nationals at bases came almost to a standstill. Many South Vietnamese employees were coerced into quitting by the Viet Cong; many others could not or did not show up for work. Likewise, the South Vietnamese government's order drafting all eligible males up to age thirty-three left several Air force civic action teams without an interpreter. Unable to converse with the refugees or government representatives themselves, these civic action officers were severely handicapped.⁹⁸

Progress on recovery was further limited by the military insecurity surrounding most bases and the resulting curfews imposed to keep airmen on base and out of

danger.⁹⁹ As the civic action officer from Phu Cat reported, to have sent even a small truckload of material off the main highway for as little as one-fourth or one-half mile would have been to invite unnecessary trouble."¹⁰⁰ Thus, expediency and sound judgment kept volunteers out of even the most accessible areas.

Then, too, many commanders were chagrined by the failure of previous civic action efforts among the bases' perimeter populations to produce significant forewarning of the impending offensive. The attitude seemed to be: "why continue to expand energy on a thankless people."¹⁰¹ The record at most bases was indeed bleak. The Viet Cong launched most attacks on air bases either from or near the very hamlets that were being aided by base programs. In most cases, weapons and supplies had been prepositioned. But local noncombatants gave warning of just three of the Tet attacks. In each of these instances, a Viet Cong offensive during the holiday season so unexpected few preparations followed. After the attacks had started in earnest, however, base defense forces received additional last-minute warnings of new enemy activity. These tips enabled airmen to take shelter before planned rocket or mortar attacks. According to one Seventh Air Force report, many American lives were saved as a consequence.¹⁰² Also to the credit of the civic action program, all of the advance warnings came through civic action contacts and each was given without active solicitation on the part of civic action personnel.¹⁰³ To have made intelligence collection an explicit goal of developmental activities would have simply confirmed Viet Cong propaganda, degraded the program's credibility, and thereby defeated its major purpose.¹⁰⁴ Even this realization, however, failed to ease the bitterness felt by some base commanders.

Thus, what was assessed of gratitude shown by villagers adjacent to U.S. bases, coupled with military insecurity and demands on almost everyone for sandbag details and overtime work, seemed to justify the Air Force's noninvolvement in relief work. Yet there were those who had a better perspective on the situation. The refugees' fate was viewed as a fundamental challenge to the Saigon regime's ability to govern. The sheer magnitude of the problem and the vacuum created by the virtual collapse of the government's own relief efforts seemed to impel a U.S. response. Consequently, General Momyer elevated civic recovery to a command mission, and Seventh Air Force commanders moved into compliance. Each of the ten bases reacted differently to the specific problems confronting it, but the central theme at all the bases was aiding the war's civilian victims.¹⁰⁵

During the initial three weeks of February, while the government was recouping from the attacks and laying the foundation for a recovery program, the Seventh Air Force concentrated on providing food and shelter for the refugees. The men at Phan Rang, for instance, became involved in the humanitarian work when the Viet Cong raided a small village on the base's outskirts early in the month, taking everything of value belonging to the 113 villagers. The airmen acted swiftly, collecting 1,300 pounds of rice, 120 pounds of clothing, and several boxes of canned goods and distributing these to the destitute residents.¹⁰⁶

The situation was particularly dismal at several air bases. At Da Nang, the local U.S. civilian organization which usually handled refugee matters did not have the capacity to cope with the masses fleeing Khe Sanh and other outlying battlefields.¹⁰⁷ As a result, the military units on base accepted almost complete responsibility for feeding and housing these people, as well as providing medical care, police protection, and transportation.¹⁰⁸ For example, between January 30 and

February 2, the 311th Air Commando Squadron, in coordination with the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, airlifted 650 refugees from Khe Sanh to Da Nang and then on to a nearby government camp at Quang Tri City. The 15th Aerial Port Squadron billeted them en route, and furnished local transportation, while the 366th Combat Support Group supplied food and blankets. Several, days later, the 311th transported an additional seventy-five refugees from Hue to Da Nang. The Vietnamese Air Force contingent on base took care of these. During this three-week period, the base also furnished approximately 2,500 refugees south of Da Nang with 2,000 pounds of rice, prepared and delivered by the base food service, and billeted and sustained 118 third country nationals for seven days. The base dispensary immunized the various refugee groups for cholera and smallpox and treated thirteen Vietnamese civilians who had been wounded in the fighting.¹⁰⁹

Other air bases administered emergency assistance in a similar fashion, often without direction from higher headquarters. The skills and resources at their immediate disposal provided the basis for the response. Fifty-five gallon drums often became latrines or water barrels; scraps from the base's dump site served as firewood; leftovers from the base cafeterias provided sustenance; and discarded clothing kept the refugees warm.¹¹⁰ And, as at Da Nang, a real time effort often developed, producing excellent results.¹¹¹

After the refugees had been evacuated to more secure areas and their most immediate needs were met, old camps had to be renovated and enlarged and new campsites prepared. Because of its maneuverability, the Air Force played a substantial role in moving materials and then relocating refugees from temporary quarters to these more permanent sites. When most of the fighting of the offensive had ended and areas were cleared of Viet Cong, airmen helped again in returning many of these refugees to their original hamlets. In addition, Air Force units furnished lumber, nails, and other construction materials used in erecting shelters.¹¹² At Nha Trang AB, for instance, personnel from the 14th Air Commando Wing requested \$24,718.30 of their \$25,000 allotment to purchase lumber. Numerous residents in several local hamlets had been burned from their homes. The wing vice commander believed the entire recovery program in the hamlets hinged on providing adequate housing for these people. His request was promptly approved, and airmen oversaw the construction of 184 structures.¹¹³

Although South Vietnamese leadership was noticeable lacking in the early stages of recovery, by the end of February the government had come a long way in recuperating from the shock of the offensive. With roads, communications, and security gradually restored, provincial committees could complete, their assessments of damage and relief requirements. And after the implementation of Operation Recovery, the South Vietnamese started to assume an upper hand in administering the relief effort. In some cases government officials requested bases to participate in specific recovery projects. In others, airmen were made responsible for entire hamlets and villages.¹¹⁴ The Seventh Air Force encouraged this trend since it showed governmental initiative and facilitated broad-based coordination of the recovery effort.¹¹⁵ "In every project, remember we are here to help the Government of Vietnam to help itself," the Seventh Air Force counselled its civic action personnel.¹¹⁶

In June, when the national crisis was judged to have ended, figures showing total Seventh Air Force activity gave a more complete picture of the service's contributions to Operation recovery. During the five preceding months, airmen

assisted more than 60,000 homeless South Vietnamese, 3,400 of whom had to be airlifted to new locations; delivered 132 tons of commodities in support of the government's program; and rebuilt or repaired more than 6,000 homes, schools, and other structures. U.S. personnel also treated and immunized more than 23,000 Vietnamese and provided dental care to some 4,000. These activities, together with the thousands of dollars of voluntary donations and appropriated funds used by the Seventh Air Force for emergency assistance, went far in helping the South Vietnamese overcome the debilitating effects of the Tet assaults.¹¹⁷

Despite U.S. Air Force assistance and encouragement, the Vietnamese government, encountered numerous problems administering the relief program. Most of these centered on inadequate funds, limited field personnel, and turmoil within the central office itself. When rumors reached Ky, for example, that he had supposedly accepted the chairmanship of the relief committee simply to upstage Thieu and to get his hands on relief funds, he resigned in a fit of anger, leaving the committee without a director.¹¹⁸ Nor did the Tet offensive—which had had a unifying effect in some areas—solve the endemic problems of local corruption and inept administrators.¹¹⁹ The problem of monetary shortages, however, was finally resolved by transferring one billion piasters from the government's revolutionary development budget to the recovery committee. But this later left the pacification program short of money.¹²⁰

After an initial burst of energy, the progress of Operation Recovery slowed because district chiefs could not obtain accurate assessments of damage. A local official, for instance, could not certify that a family's home had been destroyed and request government aid to rebuild it unless a family were present to file a claim. Since most victims were removed to refugee camps, many of their needs remained unreported and unmet. Moreover, if a claim were processed and aid did reach a refugee, the government's standard relief package (in the form of ten sheets of metal roofing, ten bags of cement, and a modest piaster cash payment equivalent to between \$42 and \$95) was usually not enough for the typical family. In those cases, homebuilding projects had to be supplemented with a variety of materials held in emergency stock at Phu Cat, Pleiku, and Tuy Hoa Air Bases.¹²¹ The building program did eventually gather momentum, however, and hundreds of thousands of refugees received government help.

There was also some concern at first that participation by the Vietnamese Air Force in civic activities would decline to a new low. Military demands upon the service were great and took precedence over voluntary duties. In addition, dependents and property of Vietnamese airmen often became targets of Viet Cong harassment and destruction. These men were understandably concerned about their families and wanted to help them first. Moreover, motivation was still low because housing deficiencies for Vietnamese Air Force members remained uncorrected.¹²²

Even though Vietnamese participation continued at a lower level than was desirable, the emergencies caused by the offensive actually led to an increased involvement at five of the six bases where South Vietnamese units were located. While American airmen were held on base by security restrictions, Vietnamese airmen, despite threats to their own safety, bore the brunt of finding food and shelter for the refugees, assisting the local populace, and continuing with normal civic action duties.¹²³ At Nha Trang, approximately 300 Vietnamese airmen helped clear debris from destroyed areas of the city and install sanitation facilities at a refugee center. The 33rd Vietnamese Air Force Wing from Tan Son Nhut almost single-handedly

managed the Binh Tay camp at Cholon which had a population of some 6,000 transients. At the same time they constructed housing at the Petrus Ky Refugee Center for 200 families, airlifted emergency medical supplies to Hue, and assisted U.S. Air Force personnel to rebuild destroyed and damaged homes in thirteen nearby hamlets.¹²⁴ And at Phu Cat, Vietnamese involvement allowed progress to continue on a five-room elementary school for refugee children in the community of An Nhon. U.S. personnel had feared that supplies for the school would be pilfered and that the project would have to be cancelled. But as the civic action officer at the base later reported, these fears proved unfounded. The Vietnamese involved with the project secured the supplies, assembled the workers, improvised a solution to the grading problem, obtained fill, and proceeded with the work. When the project was completed, they had contributed all of the labor and significant amounts of money and supplies. The local population also participated when a tile manufacturer gave a fourteen percent discount on roofing materials for the structure.¹²⁵ Thus, even in heat of combat, the civic action program continued.

The Tet offensive shocked the country psychologically. It left 13,000 civilians dead and 27,000 wounded, generated hundreds of thousands of refugees, and created numerous other local and national problems. But none of these problems proved insurmountable, the setbacks were not permanent, and the government was not overwhelmingly paralyzed. Equally important, the Viet Cong did not emerge unscathed. Although many mistakes were made and efficiency was often lacking, Saigon maintained its poise and embarked on a massive recovery effort. As the enemy was driven back, refugee camps were established, devastated areas assessed for damage, debris cleared, and homes and public facilities rebuilt. In a compliment to the Vietnamese, the chief of the U.S. refugee division notes, that "rarely has a government attempted to shelter, feed and resettle such a large number of displaced persons in time of war."¹²⁶

The long-range, developmental aspects of the pacification program suffered because of funds, commodities, and governmental attention had to be delivered to basic recovery operations. But these emergency activities had to be completed before the normal nation-building process could be resumed. Nor did the governments military withdrawal from rural- areas do the permanent political damage that had been anticipated. Questions were indeed raised initially about the government's activities. The success of Operation Recovery, however, convinced urban and rural people alike that their government was, in fact, interested in their welfare. And, as is common in times of national crises, the country actually emerged from the offensive and recovery effort more unified than before the attacks. Because the Viet Cong had been so destructive and had violated a sacred season for many of the devout, the government, almost by default, became stronger—not weaker—in the villages and hamlets of South Vietnam. Augmenting these gains, revolutionary development teams were soon returned to the countryside, and the government seemed more willing than at any other time in its history to arm its citizenry for self-defense. Moreover, the Tet offensive prompted a healthy review of the whole pacification process, convincing the government to launch an accelerated pacification drive later in the year.

For Seventh Air Force Civic Action workers also, the challenge of Tet was met and overcome. The increased enemy activity during the offensive, and the continued pressure from Viet Cong forces in the months that followed, drastically reduced the military's normal civic activities. Yet the program's momentum was preserved because

the energies, capabilities, and resources usually applied to developmental projects were directed to supporting the Vietnamese government in its urgent recovery effort. Demands placed upon the program in providing this support stretched the military's civic capabilities far in excess of normal requirements and earned the program a new respectability.

Equally important, the Seventh Air Force civic action program was not sidetracked indefinitely into humanitarian activities. By June, when requests for recovery support had diminished and security conditions had improved, base civic action Officers were again in a position to direct their efforts and resources into the normal nation-building program. And for this, the experience gained, the lessons learned, the cooperation generated, and the meaningful contacts established during the process of recovery would prove invaluable. Thus, there is considerable evidence to support the U.S. Military Assistance Command's conclusion not only that Operation Recovery was a major success, but that the whole relief effort was "one of the bright spots of 1968."¹²⁷ It is ironic that America's confidence in the struggle in Vietnam began to wane at the very moment the civic action program was showing its greatest promise.

NOTES

Chapter V: The Tet Offensive and Operation Recovery

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4. William Touhy, "Three Years of War—Yanks Still Grope for Light in Tunnel," Philadelphia Inquirer, Jan 14, 1968.
5. Remarks, Robert Komer, Press Conference, Saigon, Jan 24, 1968.
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11. Gravel Pentagon Papers, IV, 238-39, 549; Sharp and Westmoreland, Report on the War in Vietnam, p 160—61; hist, USMACV, 1968, II, 906; "After 'Tet': Measuring and Repairing the Damage," Time, Mar 15, 1968, pp 14-15.
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15. Address, Gen Leonard F. Chapman, Jr., Commandant, Marine Corps, Commonwealth Club of San Francisco, Oct 4, 1968, in Selected Statement on Vietnam by DOD, Jul 1-Dec 31, 1968, p 18; Charles Mohr, "Pacification Teams Returning to

Hamlets Abandoned After Vietcong Drive," New York Times, Mar 3, 1968, p 9; Joe H. Wagner, "Pacification: At an End....Or a New Beginning?" Armed Forces Management, Mar 68, p 83.

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CHAPTER VI

PROGRAM REFINEMENT

The command civic action program represents an effective instrument for USAF support of the Government of South Vietnam and for assistance to the local populace. In no less a manner it also represents a means of contributing to the security of our bases. To achieve these objectives, civic action activities must be carefully planned, thoroughly coordinated, and applied in a meaningful manner. The effectiveness of the program must be continually evaluated and the planning and application adjusted accordingly.

-Seventh Air Force Civic Action Division¹

The enemy's 1968 Tet offensive marked a turning point in the Vietnam War. The allied military victory over communist forces gave a tremendous boost to flag South Vietnamese morale. The country saw its military forces grow in size, effectiveness, and confidence, while those of the Viet Cong became weaker. And if the reports relayed by the Viet Cong who surrendered and defected were accurate, the enemy's morale suffered an equally dramatic erosion.²

About the same time the military picture in Vietnam was becoming brighter, another turning point in the war occurred, "When the United States and South Vietnam determined to concentrate more of their efforts and strategy on fighting the "other war." The general feeling among the war's planners was that a continuation of the military momentum built up to counter the offensive, together with intense social, economic, and psychological measures to garner more popular support would lead to a decisive victory and 091 an early end to the fighting.³

Yet the allies were unable to capitalize on these positive plans and developments. Just as the Tet fighting had given rise to optimism in South Vietnam and among military leaders generally, so it led to pessimism in the United States and eventually to a determination by the country to extricate itself completely from the conflict instead of serving as the opening battle for a victorious conclusion to the war, the Tet offensive, then, actually marked the beginning of a major allied defeat. Before many months had passed, signs foreshadowing just such an eventuality had begun to emerge. The press, the academic community, and Congress became increasingly more critical and more outspoken about U.S. involvement. The President announced his determination not to run for re-election in 1968. And the country began to de-escalate, to halt the bombing, to withdraw troops, and to call for negotiations.⁴ The process was called "Vietnamization" to allow the United States to withdraw, "without losing face. But the implications of Americas disengagement from the war were clear to the North Vietnamese: they had only to bide their time and victory would be theirs.⁵ The South Vietnamese, despite their increased vigor and optimism, were incapable militarily, economically, or psychologically to carry on the fight alone.

In mid-1968, though, this unhappy outcome still lay in the future and was not generally thought to be within the realm of possibility. Indeed, for those engaged in civic activities in South Vietnam, the future was filled with even more hope than it had been at the beginning of the year. This was true not only because the civic

program had survived the enemy's offensive, but because it had undergone considerable change as it responded to the social and economic problems generated by the Tet attacks. Most of these changes were favorable-more funds, more frequent reports, and increased Vietnamese participation, for example. These have already been discussed in some detail. But there were other changes as well, which had an equally telling impact on the future of civic activities in South Vietnam. One of the earliest and most influential was the favorable publicity which accrued from the Tet recovery effort and the high-level concern this increased attention won for the civil side of the war. Many of these changes were brought about before the end of the spring offensive; others occurred later. But the 1968 Tet campaign marked a definite watershed in the program's development. As new policies were laid down for the conduct of civic action, and much needed theoretical guidance, support, and justification were provided, the entire program underwent considerable refinements were incapable militarily, economically, or psychologically to carry on the fight alone-

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Another item which evoked extensive discussion at the conference and helped further to clarify the purposes and significance of civic action was a special air operations study undertaken early in 1967 by the Tactical Air Command. Subtitled a "Handbook- of Principles and Concepts," the study set forth the basic principles and concepts of aerospace psychological operations and civic action, Noting the responsibilities of the USAF to undertake these activities, the handbook also outlined a course of planning, training, and operational analysis and evaluation.¹⁰

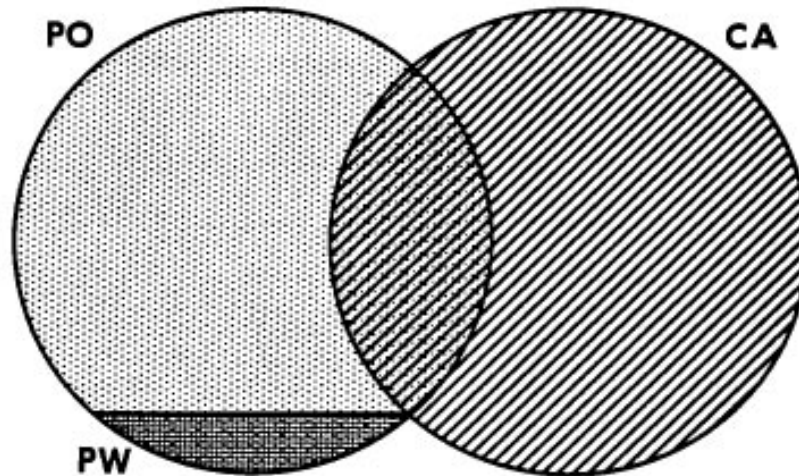
Military civic action and psychological operations had been considered a part of special air warfare 91 since the early 1960s and numerous studies had already been undertaken to provide a conceptual framework for their use in Southeast Asia. The value of this latest study, however, was its proposal that civic action and psychological operations were not just new names for old military arts. Instead, they were unique, subtle, and entirely new responses to communist-inspired insurgencies. Development of aerospace capabilities in these new areas could not, therefore, be handled with the same organizations, attitudes, and skills that had produced success in other forms of warfare. "If development of aerospace Psychological Operations and Civic Action is to be confined to the doctrines, the language, and the manner of classical warfare, these new fields will never have a chance to yield the values that lie potential in their own special dimensions of influence," the study concluded. Hence the importance of planning and training.¹¹

The consensus at the civic action conference was that more emphasis was indeed required in areas of training and doctrinal development. Conferees found that instruction was needed particularly in the history, culture, traditions, and language

of the country 'in which Air Force advisors worked. The conference was also in agreement with representatives of the Tactical Air Command that more direction was needed from higher authorities; that there was a lack of understanding as to the differences between civic action programs and community relations; and that most country plans for use of special operations were either non-existent or badly in need of updating.¹² They consented as well to the Tactical Air Command's proposal that civic action and psychological operations were essential to further U.S. policy at "all levels of conflict" and should be undertaken in concert with U.S. military operations whenever these were resorted to. With regard to the Southeast Asian conflict, they foresaw an important role for special operations even after the fighting had stopped. "When the level of violence can be de-escalated, special air warfare can continue to build or develop the target nation."¹³

There was only one major area of disagreement with the new study-its limiting Air Force participation in civic activities to those involving aircraft. Since the Air Force had a treacly demonstrated in Vietnam that its skills could be used effectively on the ground as well as in the air, conference participants recommended that the term "special air operations" be changed to "special operations." This would remove the restriction of Air Force efforts to "air." It would also accommodate the joint usage definition which had been adopted by the Joint Chiefs several years before and which had been approved for publication in the new Air Force regulation on civic action. The Tactical Air Command accepted this argument, and on July 8, 1968, redesignated its school at Hurlburt Field, Florida, the USAF Special Operations School, dropping the word "Air" from the name.¹⁴

One additional contribution which the special warfare study made to the understanding and practice of civic action was the distinction it made between the different special warfare operations. Prior to 1968, there had been considerable confusion in Vietnam over whether some activities should be categorized as psychological operations or as civic actions. This was important in determine funding sources as well as IMP in assuring the proper command and control of the operation. To reduce ambiguity, the new special warfare concept suggested that the primary purpose of an operation be taken as the basis of its classification. In many cases there would continue to be an overlap of goals and functions. Some civic activities would produce a positive psychological impact. both on the indigenous military and on the populace. Likewise, the results of psychological operations would often have an economic and social impact. Yet an overriding goal could usually be determined. When an overlap occurred, however. these mutually supporting operations could still be coupled in the planning and programming of one or the other field, on the other hand, this new system of classification would free civic action in many other cases from responsibilities in the psychological field. It was expected, for example, that well-construction and home-building would have a positive psychological impact on the recipients and would lead to a change of attitudes about the government. But in other instances, such as airfield development and some aerial spraying missions, the overriding goal was nation-building through economic development and not necessarily a change in popular attitudes. It was hoped, nonetheless, that the psychological impact of such activities would not be negative.¹⁵



PO

PSYCHOLOGICAL OPERATIONS: To create in foreign groups, emotions, attitudes, behavior to support achievement of national objectives.



PW

PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE: To influence opinions, emotions attitudes of hostile foreign groups so as to support achievement of national objectives.



CA

CIVIC ACTION: To advance host country economic and social development, also to improve image of host military.

PSYCHOLOGICAL OPERATIONS/CIVIC ACTION RELATIONSHIP

When the Pacific Air Forces conference on civic action adjourned, not only did the participants themselves have a clearer understanding of the significance of the program in relation to the fulfillment of the Air Force mission but the conclusions and recommendations they made were soon felt throughout the Air Force where civic activities were engaged. In Vietnam, the changes and improvements in the civic

action program were substantial and some of them could be traced directly to decisions made and sentiments developed at Honolulu.

One of the most far-reaching changes dealt with personnel training. The civic action conference's contribution to the new Air Force regulation stated: "MCA [military civic action] personnel must be well trained, professionally oriented and capable of organizing complete staff participation in approved programs."¹⁶ At the time it was written into the regulation, however, this statement was still only a goal which was far from being realized. Most personnel assigned to civic action positions reported for duty only minimally qualified and with very little understanding of civic operations, special warfare, or the U.S. advisory system in which they were expected to function. They usually came from a wide variety of backgrounds, few of which t)repared them for the duties they would be performing in Vietnam.¹⁷ A look at the previous positions held by the civic action staff at Seventh Air Force headquarters during 1967 and 1968 shows the diversity involved.

One officer, for example, had been a scheduler for the Strategic Air Command; and others had served as a personnel officer, a division head for an air commando squadron, and an ROTC officer.¹⁸ When this lack of practical experience in civic activities was coupled with inadequate classroom instruction, inefficiency and ineffectiveness were not unusual results.¹⁹

These problems were compounded by ineffective utilization of on-the-job training. Civic action officers were usually rotated in such a way that a vacancy would appear before the new replacement arrived. In such cases briefings by the experienced officer were not possible, and, consequently, the programs already in progress often suffered from a loss of continuity.²⁰ Then too, the constant one-year rotation of men was not conducive to developing a close U.S. -Vietnamese working relationship-an absolutely essential requirement for a successful program in which the Vietnamese were supposed to play the primary role.²¹ The rapid turnover of personnel also essentially ruled out the possibility of ever having any really well qualified men working in the program. Just when an officer began to feel comfortable with his job, his tour was usually up and the knowledge and experience he had gained would be wasted when he returned to his primary assignment in the Air Force.²² But the problem of having tour lengths of too short duration was a problem with almost all military positions in Vietnam and was not unique to civic action.²³

Another very serious deficiency which persistently degraded the effectiveness of USAF civic action was the lack of intercultural training and the failure by servicemen throughout the military establishment to appreciate the complex cultural, psychological, and religious makeup of the people of Southeast Asia.²⁴ Military civic action, as it was conducted in the nation-building sense, had the primary task of teaching and motivating. The accomplishment of this function necessitated an understanding of the real nature and objectives of military civic action as well as the U.S. civilian and military organizations under which the program operated. But equally important to the program's success, civic action personnel needed a thorough knowledge of the Vietnamese people. To be successful at civic action, one USAF civic action officer noted, "the guy doing the job must forget he is an American and absorb portions of the Vietnamese way of life. He must eat cold squid, suck eggs, and drink-rice wine out of a glass. Success is lasting only when it is Vietnamese success."²⁵ Since one of their principal duties was bringing government officials and the Vietnamese people together to work out a meaningful program of community development among

themselves, U.S. civic action advisors also needed to completely understand the political frame-work-in which those officials operated. Knowledge in both of these areas was often inadequate and progress in nation-building and communist 37 development suffered accordingly.²⁶

The lack of insight into the Vietnamese culture had other negative consequences also. The problem of "mirror-imaging" persisted into 1968 when Americans failed to act on the lessons taught by flier earlier experiences with this phenomenon (see Chapter III). They continued to erroneously believe that Vietnamese peasants had the same needs and priorities as Americans, and as a result, many of their projects were either of questionable value or meaningless.²⁷ Likewise, there is ample evidence to suggest that American mannerisms and behavior did not significantly improve despite General Westmoreland's earlier emphasis on good troop behavior.²⁸ While some misbehavior by U.S. troops appeared to be intentional (such as U.S. and Vietnamese troops looting cities and towns during the 1968 Tet offensive), other violations of Vietnamese standards were unintentional and were rooted in the general American ignorance of Vietnamese culture.²⁹ When Asian sensibilities were insulted, however, few of the offended individuals were capable of discriminating between these different motives. Any instance of poor judgment or improper behavior then, whatever its cause, made it more difficult for American civic action workers to win the trust and cooperation of the Vietnamese people.³⁰ A report by one senior USAF officer capsules the feeling of inadequacy experienced by many Americans who recognized this deficiency in cultural training as a major American problem:

I have noted that we have very few people in the Air Force who know about raising rice and the agricultural economics of Southeast Asia. We have competent medics, pilots and communicators, but very few of them know a language other than English. Our civil engineers can design beautiful buildings and facilities, but they rarely understand the social dynamics of the culture. Even the simplest foreign society has a social and religious law which affects the use or disuse of the things we might design for it. In short, it is not enough for us to be generous and enthusiastic; we must constantly bear in mind the environment of the people with whom we are dealing.³¹

Another American, serving as a volunteer in Khanh Hoa Province, described a similar feeling.

Some of the conduct we think is good or natural, may be seen as negative by the Vietnamese. After all, it is not really what we do or say that is important; rather it is what the Vietnamese think about what we do not say. They perceive things differently in ways we don't often seem able to understand. For example, many soldiers like to give candy and cigarettes to children, because they like children and want to make friends. But many Vietnamese parents resent this, because it suggests to their children that the parents don't give them enough, because it makes some children into beggars of a sort, and finally because it weakens the authority of the family and has an adverse effect on the conduct of the children.³²

One of the suggestions this concerned observer proffered was providing American civilian and military personnel with a "thorough political education" in Vietnamese history, language, customs, religion, and other matters likely to influence relations.³³

By the time of the March conference on civic action, some steps had already been taken to provide more training for airmen being assigned to special warfare duties in Southeast Asia. In July 1962, at the direction of President Kennedy, the Air University's Air Command and Staff College had filmed a basic special operations course for use by Air Force units involved with insurgency warfare. In November of that year, however, USAF headquarters directed the Air University to conduct a regular counterinsurgency course for officers being assigned to various duties-among them, service in the Second Air Division in South Vietnam. This two-week course became a standard offering at Maxwell from March 1963 through November 1966. In January 1967, the USAF Special Air Operations School at Hurlburt Field became responsible for conducting this training.³⁴ At least one officer who went through the course at Maxwell, however found it inadequate-concentrating mainly on a study of tactics used to defeat insurgent forces. Although the course outline gave some attention to civic actions and psychological operations, there was almost no treatment of the Vietnamese cultural context for these activities or the reasons for an American presence in Southeast Asia. This officer noted that "if young officers come over here [to Vietnam] with no more sense of purpose than to try to figure out how to trap, eliminate, or kill over the VC in Zone D, they will be mightily frustrated before they finish their tour. Some of them may possibly feel cheated, betrayed, [or] abandoned."³⁵ Another officer, who attended the counterinsurgency course at Hurlburt Field before taking on a base civic action job in Vietnam, found the same to be true. He noted that the course "was informative, but did not prepare me for what I found. What I needed after I got there were specifics."³⁶

By 1967 the Tactical Air Command had also become dissatisfied with the special warfare training it was offering airmen bound for assignments in Southeast Asia. The results of a query sent to USAF field commands also indicated a requirement throughout the Air Force for an extensive psychological operations/civic action training program.³⁷ Consequently, the Special Air Warfare Center undertook its own study and in the process formulated an experimental training program which it submitted to the Air Force Chief of Staff for his consent. A fifteen-week course was envisioned, with considerable emphasis placed on language and inter-cultural instruction.³⁸ While the special warfare school waited for the Air Staff's formal approval, it prepared and presented an interim two-week course to a selected group of students beginning in November.³⁹ Attendance was limited to twenty field-grade officers, and the course curriculum was almost equally divided between psychological operations and civic action. The Special Air Warfare Center did not expect this 'initial orientation course to produce fully trained officers, but it did hope to provide those who attended a better understanding of the USAF's role in psychological operations and civic action and thereby to improve the Air Force's participation in these activities.⁴⁰

By mid-December, it was evident that the fifteen week course would not be implemented in the near future. Although the Air Staff promised to study the proposal, it explained that personnel and budgetary requirements in other areas were such that the course could not be substantiated until total Air Force objectives and resource requirements [were] specifically defined.⁴¹ As an alternative, the Air Staff offered investigation of the possibility of a joint training program with other U.S.

agencies. It also suggested that it might be more desirable to reorient the proposed long course into an overall treatment of special air operations, with specialized training in psychological operations and civic actions provided as appendages. A graduate from the course could then be designated as fully-qualified in a new special operations career field. But in the meantime, while these alternatives were being more fully explored the Air Staff gave its tentative approval for a continuation of the experimental two-week course on a quarterly basis for an indefinite period of time. No stipulation was given to provide language or in-depth cultural training.⁴²

Nor did this decision solve the problem of inadequate training for those personnel involved with civic action on a day-to-day basis. This shorter course was designed for officers serving or programmed to serve in staff positions at the joint, unified, and major command level and which involved operations or operational planning. Base civic action officers serving in Southeast Asia normally had the rank of captain. Their assistants were either sergeants or staff sergeants. While attendance by these junior officers or their assistants was not discouraged, space limitations and the relative infrequency of the course served, in fact, to restrict their participation.⁴³ Under normal circumstances, these officers received no training at all, except reading several handbooks or other printed materials and talking with people who had served in similar assignments.⁴⁴ Such, then, was the situation in March 1968 when the subject of training was broached at the Pacific Air Forces conference on civic action. It was at this point that the Tactical Air Command brought forward its year-old proposal which was dealt another blow-this time because of its exclusive emphasis on actual applications of civic action. As noted earlier, however, this action did not signify a decline of interest in or opposition to the idea of well-trained culturally aware civic action personnel. On the contrary, the mood within the Air Force and the Department of Defense as a whole was one of growing acceptance of the view that personnel being assigned overseas required some special preparation for the intercultural aspects of such assignments.⁴⁵ And numerous studies were being circulated throughout the military services pointing out this requirement. One study, for example, found that failures and deficiencies in performance by military personnel stationed overseas were quite frequent and were due largely to the lack of intercultural skills. "According to the best available estimates," this study concluded, "one-quarter or more of those selected for overseas turn out to be obvious failures. As large a percentage perhaps will be hidden failures-marginal performers who retain their position but whose work does not fully meet its requirement."⁴⁶

Another study detailed additional reasons for this poor performance: "cultural shock;" faulty concepts of the roles to be played and the mission to be accomplished; unrealistic expectations-inability to adjust aspects and proposals to the felt needs and social-cultural context of the host people-inability to understand the behavior and attitudes of the people, and difficulties in establishing rapport and in communicating effectively.⁴⁷ The ill consequences of each of these deficiencies could be significantly reduced with more and better training. But the short, pre-departure "orientation" courses, such as those provided by the Special Air Warfare Center, were found not to be an adequate solution. As another researcher pointed out, "simply describing cultural differences, setting forth principles of good overseamanship, or delineating good behaviors are unlikely alone to bring about the changes in attitude, perception, or behavior that are needed."⁴⁸

Not only did these studies serve to motivate the Air Force to rethink its position

on special warfare training, but two other events encouraged a similar reaction. One was the decision by USAF headquarters to identify more clearly and possibly redefine the role of Air Force special forces in support of the United States foreign internal defense policy. The position of several Air Force commands was that the Air Force's potential for civic action-except for tactical airlift-had been largely labored by the other military services. And they found the same true for the other Air Force special operations.⁴⁹ It seemed only logical that if the Air Force were determined to use its special forces to a fuller extent and to demonstrate its proficiency in this area, it would need to update its training program. Action in this regard was initiated in April 1968 when the Air Training Command was asked to pinpoint areas of weakness and formulate a training proposal to overcome them.⁵⁰

The second event which helped establish the need for more Air Force training in civic action was the closing of the Military Assistance Institute. This school had responsibility for training personnel from all the military services who were assigned civic duties under the military Assistance Program and, consequently, the Air Force itself had not developed a training program for this purpose. Termination of instruction at the Institute made the Air Force realize that if it did not increase its capability to pave the necessary civic and cultural instruction to its own personnel, the Army's John F. Kennedy Center at Fort Bragg would most likely inherit this responsibility by default. Some in the Air Force (particularly the Tactical Air Command which expected to have a large role in the training) suggested that this development would be a step backward for the Air Force. Since the Army already dominated the area of special warfare to a large extent, the Air Force did not wish to lose still more ground in its relationship with the Army.⁵¹

If having suitably trained people to man the Air Force's civic action program was of concern to USAF headquarters and major commands, it was of even greater importance to units in the field which had the responsibility for making the program work and showing that progress was being made. Within the Seventh Air Force, efforts to obtain more informed personnel also began to bear fruit in 1968. The result was a more refined civic action program, with greater continuity and greater potential for influencing events in South Vietnam.

By April, the Seventh Air Force had determined two different courses of action it had to follow to meet the educational goals outlined at Honolulu. One centered on improving the technical and cultural training offered to its full-time base civic action personnel. The other was aimed at increasing the cultural awareness of the Vietnamese-based Air Force population in general and informing them of their civic responsibilities to the people and government of South Vietnam.

A top priority for the Seventh Air Force was getting civic action established as a separate career field. This idea had been proposed earlier by the Air Staff, but no action had been taken.⁵² By the beginning of 1968, both airmen and officers had begun to inquire about civic action as a career field. Some desired to volunteer for duty in Southeast Asia in civic action. Junior officers in particular were interested in special air warfare assignments which, at that time, were restricted to officers of field grade rank.⁵³

Late in January, the civic action council picked up this idea. They suggested that if such a position could be created, the argument for having trained personnel to fill the slots would appear more valid.⁵⁴ A request to this effect was made to Pacific Air Forces headquarters in April, and on July 1, all base civic action officer positions in

Southeast Asia were given a speciality code (AFSC 0316) and a new title: Special Air Warfare Officer.⁵⁵ On January 31, 1970, this area of specialization was abolished and a new utilization field in the operations career field, called Special Operations, was established with two areas of specialization. The designation Special Operations Officer (AFSC 2124) was assigned to the persons responsible for planning, organizing, directing, and coordinating special operations activities. These individuals could be assigned duties in the interrelated fields of counterinsurgency, psychological warfare, unconventional warfare, or civic actions. The other specialty, Special Operations Staff Officer (AFSC 2116) was the command and staff counterpart of 2124.⁵⁶

During the same time that new career fields were being established to identify qualified officers to perform special operations like civic action, special civic action identifier codes were also established for enlisted personnel with civic action-related experience. This facilitated the assignment of qualified non-commissioned officers to vacancies when they developed.⁵⁷ At the same time the Seventh Air Force proposed making civic action a separate career field it also recommended that inbound civic action personnel receive en route training at the psychological operations/civic action course at Hurlburt Field.

Implementation of this suggestion took longer, however. Between April and November only two of the five new base officers assigned to South Vietnam had received any training prior to their arrival, and these had attended only a shortened version of the regular counterinsurgency course normally given by the Special Operations Center.⁵⁸ Even this training would not have been available had Pacific Air Forces not specifically requested that these two officers and four others assigned to its area of responsibility receive some pre-assignment training.⁵⁹ These poor results led the Seventh Air Force civic action council to begin investigating the possibility of sending its officers to the Army's psychological operations course at Fort Bragg.⁶⁰ But finally on February 7, 1969, the USAF military personnel center, with authorization from Air Force headquarters, began scheduling civic action officers for civic action and counterinsurgency training on a more regular basis.⁶¹ Most civic action officers were now able to obtain at least some civic action instruction prior to their arrival in Southeast Asia. Civic action training was still not mandatory, however, and as late as 1971, officers were still arriving for duty in South Vietnam without any schooling or other special preparation.⁶² One civic action officer even reported having "to fight" to get to attend the two-week special operations course.⁶³

A significant milestone in the in-country training of civic action personnel and volunteers to the programs was reached in the spring of 1969 when the Secretary of the Air Force approved and directed the implementation of an overseas language training program in Southeast Asia. The approved plan provided for a total of 11,500 Air Force personnel to be trained yearly in conversational Thai and Vietnamese in classes of sixty hours duration. Each base could expect 700 graduates per year. A program of this type had been sought by the Seventh Air Force civic action division since 1967. Requests had also been made for group study courses covering the history, culture, and people of Vietnam. Although these group courses were not approved, a compromise was reached in that the language training was oriented toward the social and cultural aspects of each country. A pilot course was set up initially at Tan Son Nhut. Special equipment was then shipped in and language laboratories were established at each base except Binh Thuy. Civic action personnel and others who dealt frequently with Vietnamese and Thai nationals were expected to be the prime

beneficiaries of the program. Although a more comprehensive pre-assignment language training program would have been preferable for regular civic action officers, these shorter courses reached more people and were themselves a decided asset to the civic action program.⁶⁴

One other formal in-country training program open to USAF civic action personnel beginning in 1968 was the one-week advisors' orientation course conducted in Saigon by Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS). This American organization was responsible for directing all U.S. pacification efforts. The purpose of the course it sponsored was to provide new advisors from all commands an up-to-date overview of the total pacification program, including its organization and goals. Since the civic action program was regarded as the major USAF contribution to the pacification effort and because civic action personnel were expected to coordinate their efforts with local CORDS advisors, the course proved valuable to the Seventh Air Force. Except for printed materials circulated irregularly to USAF civic action personnel, there was very little other instruction available to them on pacification principles and procedures.⁶⁵

In addition to formal courses of instruction designed primarily for full-time civic action personnel, there were other educational efforts made by the Seventh Air Force to reach all its personnel with information about the civic action program and their responsibilities to further its goals. At their October 1967 meeting, base civic action officers unanimously agreed that the orientation of newly assigned USAF personnel in Vietnam was inadequate. Even civic action volunteers had to be briefed on elemental information about South Vietnamese society and customs to preclude their innocently committing actions offensive to the Vietnamese people.⁶⁶

Shortly before these Air Force officers met, the Military Assistance Command issued a directive entitled "Command information." This publication contained a challenge to each of the services: "Increase the individual serviceman's understanding and appreciation of the Vietnamese people, their culture, history, customs, political goals, and their military struggle against insurgency and aggression."⁶⁷ It was widely known that the III Marine Amphibious Force devoted two full days to an orientation of the individual Marine concerning his personal response to the Vietnamese and their customs. Seventh Air Force bases by comparison, tended to assign responsibility for a newcomer's orientation to the base's personnel director, although Da Nang Air Base had a cultural orientation program in operation as early as January 1968. Based on recommendations from base civic action officers, the civic action council decided, therefore, to formulate its own "Command Information" and "Personal Response" programs.⁶⁹

By April, both programs were in operation at each base where USAF personnel worked. The Personal Response Program was conducted by the Seventh Air Force chaplain. It was modeled closely after the naval chaplaincy's program and was aimed primarily at bettering American Vietnamese relations.⁷⁰ The Command Information Program turned into a many-faceted effort to disseminate cultural information throughout the command and to publicize the Air Force's civic activities. A variety of different media was used. There were, of course, the *Civic Action News* and the *Seventh Air Force News*. And during 1968, the civic action council increased the use of both these supplications. It was decided in March, for example, that council members themselves would provide pertinent staff inputs for the newsletter and that the monthly publication would be established in sufficient copies for distribution at

each Seventh Air Force unit. That same month a series of articles was prepared and published in the *Seventh Air Force News* to inform the command of the objectives and background of the civic action program. The Seventh Air Force director of information was also successful in establishing a civic action page in the *News* to publicize notable civic activities as models for command-wide use and imitation. Each base was provided explicit instructions for developing and submitting material for publication. In addition to these periodicals, the civic action council expected that Seventh Air Force vertical staff publications would provide permanent civic action information for the field. As noted earlier, these efforts were especially effective during Operation Recovery when many military personnel became aware of Air Force civic actions for the first time.⁷¹

Besides the printed media, the Command Information Program used other means of communication as well to reach Air Force personnel at all levels and units in Vietnam. The civic action division, for example, prepared a background briefing for use during the orientation of commanders, civic action council members, unit coordinators, volunteer workers, and Vietnamese and Free World counterparts working with other civic action programs.⁷² And throughout 1967, the 600th Photo Squadron worked to prepare a thirty-minute colored film and commentary on Seventh Air Force civic action also for use during the orientation of new personnel. Late in December it was ready for its first showing under the title "Building a Nation." The film met with such success the Air Force Office of Information approved it for Air Force wide release in January 1969.⁷³

This wide variety of programs designed to teach full-time personnel and volunteers the technicalities of civic action, to disseminate information about the program, and to increase the cultural knowledge of all USAF personnel led not only to an increased awareness of the mission of military civic action but also to a greater acceptance of the program in general-among both military personnel and the Vietnamese populace.⁷⁴ At least in this case, the old adage that understanding increases tolerance proved true.

Very closely related to the problem of insufficient training were problems concerned with manning the civic action program. In September 1966 numerous problems had been resolved when the Seventh Air Force created a separate staff office for civic action and assigned civic action officers to all combat support groups. And by mid-1967, each base had also been authorized a three-man team consisting of one officer, one non-commissioned officer, and one Vietnamese interpreter.⁷⁵ These actions went a long way in formalizing a better coordinated, more comprehensive program and in establishing civic action as a part of the total Air Force mission. Yet numerous inadequacies still remained. As with training problems, some of these were resolved while others were not. Those changes that were implemented, however, added significantly to the previous efforts to make the Seventh Air Force civic action program more effective.

Of paramount concern to the civic action staff was the necessity for maintaining a continuity of operations when tours of duty normally lasted only one year for civic action officers.⁷⁶ Capt. Stanley D. Stephenson, assigned to the Cam Ranh Bay civic action office, later reported that the program he developed was vastly different from that of his predecessor and that his successor's program would be different from his. He concluded: "This lack of action continuity was frustrating to the Vietnamese, I am sure."⁷⁷

The arrangement to give replacements counterinsurgency training in the United

States prior to their arrival in South Vietnam helped considerably to cut back on the time required for the replacement to become proficient in his new position. A report from one of the officers who had attended this training was that it had put him at least a month ahead in his job.⁷⁸ Yet even when this pre-assignment instruction was given, the tasks and duties of civic action officers were such that it still took them from two to six months to learn the fundamentals of the program, to become effective in dealing with the local populace, and to get firsthand the experience that could not be provided in a classroom.⁷⁹ Being a rather specialized function, civic action duty required extensive local orientation. The problems encountered by an officer working with the Montagnards at Pleiku, for example, were vastly different from those at Da Nang where the entire surrounding area was insecure. And because of the nature of the job, the civic action office success depended almost completely on the types of relationships he developed with the local populace, village and provincial leaders, CORDS representatives, and U. S. and Vietnamese military personnel.⁸⁰

The adverse impact this long adjustment period had on the continuity of civic action programs was aggravated by the fact that at most bases the experienced officer had already left the country by the time his replacement arrived. Some spaces remained vacant for over a month; the average was twenty-four days a year.⁸¹ Not only did this policy inhibit progress on projects already underway, but the commanding officer could not take advantage of the experience gained by the man he was replacing. The experiences of Lt. Col. Joseph P. Conrad (then Captain) serves as a case in point. Col. Conrad had attended the two-week counterinsurgency course before his arrival at Da Nang Air Base in February 1969, but he was frustrated and handicapped from the outset because the officer he was replacing was in Saigon, out-processing to return to the United States. The outgoing officer was able to talk with him for only an hour before he left the country. His assistant, a sergeant, had been assigned only the month before. According to Conrad, "there were no files; there were no regulations—there was nothing other than two desks...and a draft of the report overdue to Seventh Air Force Headquarters, I thought some pretty nasty thoughts about that time.... We did not know who was what.... We learned, but paid with time, which was the one commodity we could least afford."⁸²

The solution to this problem was rotating assignments in such a way as to permit an overlap between old and new officers. The period of adjustment could thereby be shortened and much discontinuity eliminated. The departing officer possessed a literal storehouse of information. If he were on hand when his replacement arrived, this reservoir could be tapped. He could introduce the incoming officer to the appropriate contacts on a personal basis, provide him with information on the peculiarities of his area of responsibility, and brief him on the status of the projects already in progress.⁸³

The civic action council made such a proposal to Pacific Air Forces as early as September 1968, what recommended a thirty-day overlap initially. No action followed since the policy within the command was not to allow personnel positions to overlap in any job.⁸⁴ But the civic action staff persisted and again in December suggested that new assignees be scheduled for psychological operations and civic action training in sufficient time to permit a reporting date not later than seven days prior to the departure of the individuals they were to replace.⁸⁵ Finally, in February 1969, the councils recommendation for an overlap of one week was approved. The Pacific Air Forces command specified, however, that local commanders had to guarantee that it be a productive week.⁸⁶ By March the civic action staff noted that

the new arrangement was already proving its value, allowing new officers to continue the progress to which the civic action program was committed.⁸⁷

Another area of concern for the civic action council was the need for more full-time people to run the program. As noted earlier, the original concept of manning for military civic action was that of a predominately voluntary effort. Volunteers from base units planned and conducted independent activities -in conjunction with the local Vietnamese institutions adjacent to each base. Activities fell primarily into the categories of social welfare and community relations. Most of the labor was supplied by these American volunteers. There was no master plan and there were no full-time, primary-duty personnel.

In late 1966 and early 1967, as the Military Assistance Command and the United States Air Force began to emphasize the value of military civic action in combating insurgency, the permanent three-man team was established to manage and coordinate the voluntary efforts at each base where Seventh Air Force personnel were stationed. At this same time, the previous emphasis on welfare and community relations activities shifted more to socioeconomic operations. The aim now became that of developing enough expertise and self-reliance among Vietnamese government officials, the Vietnamese Air Force, and the local populace that they could eventually take over the entire nation-building role themselves.⁸⁸ One result of this shift in emphasis was an increase in the amount of civic activity over a much larger geographical area. Another was the need for civic action laborers capable of working with indigenous personnel rather than ignoring the Vietnamese and doing all the work themselves.

Even so, the idea of voluntary labor playing a larger role in military civic action operations still prevailed. In fact, the small size of the civic action team was predicated on the belief that volunteers from base units would not only be available in sufficient numbers to conduct a major portion of the military civic action operations at the base but also be capable of doing so in an effective and efficient manner.⁸⁹ The men who did volunteer were highly motivated and did indeed perform very well in many cases. The basic premise of availability and "capability" among these people, however, did not prove altogether valid.

The increased demand for more civic projects meant the need for more manhours of work. Even during relatively stable periods, volunteers had little time left for civic action after they had worked a normal ten to twelve-hour duty day. But in crucial times, these men were often not available at all to insure a continuity of operations. During the communists' winter-spring offensive in 1968, for instance, both the increased demands on personnel for military duty, coupled with the m security surroundings, most bases, sharply cut back on both the numbers of people available for civic work and those willing to volunteer for it under the extremely hazardous conditions that existed in some places.⁹⁰ The civic activities undertaken during the Tet offensive, however, represented a return to the older social welfare aspects of an earlier day. Although the volunteer's availability was often limited and it was almost impossible to schedule his time reliably, the Tet recovery projects could still be performed quite well by these relatively inexperienced workers. The real test for the civic action program came after the offensive was quelled and the program reverted to the nation-building sphere once again to support a stepped-up Vietnamese pacification effort.

Although volunteers served reasonably well on community relations and social welfare projects, they rarely had an understanding of all the facets of military civic

action to do effective work in the area of nation building.⁹¹ In particular, they lacked an understanding of the program's objectives and the political framework in which the Vietnamese governmental officials operated. Full-time civic action personnel gained a proper understanding of these two factors over a period of many months of work involving continuous my participation in civic action operations and very close liaison with government workers. The volunteer simply did not have the time or desire to master the business of civic action.⁹² "Only a small percentage really saw the overall objective of improving the Government of Vietnam," one former civic action officer reported, "the rest just wanted to get out and do something that made them feel good.... You can't realize the situation until you have seen the frightening picture of 60 well-meaning Americans descend upon a Montagnard hamlet of 200 people."⁹³

At bases where the volunteer concept was used extensively, experience showed that the full-time civic action personnel had to spend the majority of their time helping the volunteers conduct their projects. Time had to be spent enlisting the support of the volunteer, freeing him for work on the project, giving him the necessary instruction, helping him obtain materials and transportation, and then advising him on how to report his activities. The result was often a loss of interest by the volunteer and delayed or cancelled projects because laborers were not available when needed. Cam Ranh Bay, for instance, had the largest hospital in Vietnam and by comparative standards, a good civic action program; but the medical civic action team was composed mostly of volunteers. During the entire month of February 1969 (Tet) the team did not go out for fear of a repeat of Tet 1968. And at other times, if just a mortar landed on base, the team would not go out for a few days. "Their actions did not go unnoticed by the Vietnamese," commented the Cam Ranh Bay civic action officer.⁹⁴ Moreover, the constant attention required to supervise voluntary workers diverted the energies of the military civic action officer from his primary task of working with CORDS advisors and Vietnamese government officials to plan a worthwhile program and then establish it. One base civic action officer, in describing the incongruity between the work his full-time enlisted assistant was supposed to do and what his job actually demanded, stated, "The job description required an administrative NCO. The actual work required a cross between a boy scout leader, a psychologist, a longshoreman, a thief, and a humanitarian."⁹⁵

And while arguing for more full-time people, another officer expressed a similar problem he encountered.

We do not take one of our pilots, give him an airplane and bombs and say, "go out and find a target." To do this would be gross negligence in the conduct of war and the pursuit of peace. But, to a great extent, we are forced in to doing something quite similar to this in civic action. With only a two man office, its virtually impossible to do little more than find and coordinate the projects and then tell the volunteer workers to go out and assist the people and their government. Indeed, I believe a thorough examination of many projects would even lead to a serious questioning of their value. In addition, in any program such as this, where assisting the Vietnamese government in pacification ... national unification and submission of subversive activity and teach' are of prime importance, the actual project accomplishment can count for

only 25% of the job. The other and the most important part of the job is the 75% which appears below the surface. It is how the project may be made to influence the thoughts, beliefs, and practices of the people, in other words, the social psychological aspects of the action. As presently structured, the civic action people cannot advise local citizens or officials in how to best attack the latter 75% in a comprehensive or intelligent fashion. It is from the latter portion where civic action will reap its greatest benefits.⁹⁶

The inadequacy of the volunteer concept had been recognized by some civic action personnel as early as the spring of 1967. And by January 1968, the 37th Combat Support Group at Phu Cat Air Base had developed a proposal for expanding each base's three-man civic action office into a primary-duty civic action team capable of conducting and directing extensive civic action operations at each base. The team would consist of a group of eight specialists. In addition to a base civic action officer, a Vietnamese interpreter, and a political and psychological program advisor positions were provided for specialists in such areas as 91 training, site development, inventory management, construction, and administration.⁹⁷ Each team member would be well-trained in his area of specialization as well as in the history, customs, religion and government of Vietnam. The teams would operate under a positive set of long-range objectives, tailored to the locality and environment of each air base.⁹⁸

This proposal was submitted to the Seventh Air Force civic action council for approval. It was under consideration when the Tet offensive intervened, which, by depleting the number of volunteers available for base programs, accentuated the need for more full-time personnel. Based on the abundance of demand for civic action in areas contiguous to major bases, coupled with the shortage of both trained and voluntary personnel to carry out the work, the council placed its support behind the proposal.⁹⁹ It believed that the team concept would allow for both a more continuous civic action program at each base as well as a broader scope of activity:

The present authorization for one officer and one NCO as the sole staff of the Base Civic Action Office is not sufficient to carry out the civic action program on the scale deemed desirable and necessary. The almost exclusive reliance of a base civic action program on volunteer help does not lend itself to the establishment of a professional continuity of program and the establishment of strong United States-host country respect and confidence.¹⁰⁰

Pacific Air Forces also approved the new civic action team proposal. And the additional fifty personnel authorizations it required were validated and placed on the Priority List of Operations Requirements to be implemented when personnel resources permitted.¹⁰¹ Higher tactical requirements and manpower ceilings imposed by the command, however, precluded the spaces ever being filled. In February 1970, frustration caused the Seventh Air Force civic action division to remove the request for additional men from the Priority List. It appeared that document would never be a satisfactory vehicle for resolving the manpower shortage and establishing the civic action team.¹⁰²

Later that year the Seventh Air Force civic action division authorized a staff study to redetermine the requirement for additional manning and restate the request if it were justified. The study found that additional manpower was indeed required for a more effective program. It suggested augmenting the then current three-man team with one additional officer and two additional enlisted personnel. These six-man teams would then be assigned to eight of the ten air bases in South Vietnam. The size of the team as well as its composition were based on a test case involving the Tan Son Nhut program where two officers, two noncommissioned officers and one Vietnamese national were assigned full-time for four and one-half months.¹⁰³

To bypass channels which had previously proved unproductive, it was proposed that the additional officers and enlisted people requested come from lower priority Seventh Air Force resources to establish a so-called "zero balance realignment" in total Seventh Air Force planning. Although fewer personnel were requested in this second proposal, it contained a recommendation that each team be provided two additional trucks to supplement the one other vehicle already assigned to each base office. The resulting increase in mobility would theoretically extend the teams manpower resources over a wider area and make up for the fewer people. The sites of many projects were as far as twenty-five miles from base-some even farther. Furthermore, travel off-base by civic action teams frequently took place in some of the less secure areas of Vietnam and most often involved extremely rough roads and adverse weather conditions. It was argued that additional vehicles would solve the numerous problems associated with managing these far-flung operations and transporting civic action materials under such conditions.¹⁰⁴ Despite these conclusions by the study committee, neither of its recommendations was ever implemented. And so throughout the war, the need remained for adequately manned military civic action teams with enough mobility to conduct a truly effective program.

The Seventh Air Force civic action staff met a similar impasse in its attempts to augment the programs medical manpower capabilities. Experience had shown that medical team visits were an essential forerunner for future successful civic action efforts.¹⁰⁵ The initial contact with a hamlet population could be handled adequately with voluntary labor. In administering medical help on a sustained basis, however (as was required to reinforce pacification efforts) it was important to have professionally qualified team members.¹⁰⁶

In the fall of 1967, in view of the achievements in the medical civic action program throughout the command and the degree of health assistance needed by the people of Vietnam, the Seventh Air Force surgeon general's office advanced a proposal for the formation of a nine-man, primary duty medical civic action team at each major base in Vietnam.¹⁰⁷ The director of safety concurred with the recommendation. A high percentage of aircraft mishaps occurred during the takeoff and landing phase, creating a high probability for property damage and injury to the population in the vicinity of airfields. It was believed that medical teams, which would already have established a good rapport with the people and which would be available for instantaneous response to civilian injuries, would be more understanding and would greatly reduce the bad feelings toward the USAF in the event of a crash.¹⁰⁸

At the Pacific Air Forces civic action conference in March 1968, the notion of medical personnel working full time upgrading Vietnamese facilities and training Vietnamese medics was broached once more and received strong support.¹⁰⁹ Shortly thereafter, the Pacific Air Forces command approved the concept, and the requirement

for twenty medically-qualified officers and fifty airmen was placed on the Seventh Air Force Priority List.¹¹⁰ But, as with the request for more managing for regular civic action teams, no further moves were made toward implementation. In March 1969, with a marked note of resignation, the surgeon general reflects that "should headroom restrictions ever permit authorization of spaces for the approved and validated full time medical civic action team at each base, a truly, major contribution could be made by the USAF civic action program in Vietnam."¹¹¹

Despite the failure to obtain well-manned USAF civic action teams and the obvious limitations this failure placed on the programs effectiveness, it can be argued, nonetheless, that having understated teams had at least one positive consequence. Americans had always had some problems finding a proper role for themselves in Vietnam. Technically they were to be advisors, but more often than not they became active participants, sometimes over Americanizing and pushing the South Vietnamese out completely.¹¹² This was especially true with civic action. By its nature, however, and because of its objectives, civic action was best when planned and executed by the indigenous forces themselves. By procrastinating in properly equipping the U.S. teams, then, the American military actually insured that if civic activities were to be engaged in at all, the Vietnamese would have to do a considerable amount of the work themselves. This proved true in several cases during Tet, for instance, when Americans were called away on other matters or kept out base by travel restrictions, the Vietnamese carried on alone on numerous aspects, achieving unexpectedly successful results.¹¹³ And during the process of Vietnamization when the number of American civic action personnel was reduced even further, the participation and enthusiasm of the Vietnamese increased dramatically early.¹¹⁴

Despite some failings, then, the civic action program was able to move forward, to capitalize on the opportunities presented by the Tet offensive, and to emerge a more professional part of the Seventh Air Force organization. New regulations were published, training was increased, improvements were made in manning the program, and more effort was expended on publicity in order to win command support and to attract and make better use of voluntary labor. The real opportunity for civic action to grow, however, appeared late in 1968 when civilian and military leaders in Vietnam launched an intensive effort to redefine the program's responsibilities and goals in relation to the South Vietnamese government's own pacification program. This renewed emphasis on the value of civic action would allow the refining process to continue. Each air base would be assigned a specific geographical area of responsibility. Command requirements for interservice and interagency coordination would eliminate much redundancy and duplication of effort. And emphasis on joint projects with Vietnamese civilians and military personnel would help to reorient the program to its original goal of getting the Vietnamese involved in programs to further their own development.

NOTES

Chapter VI: Program Refinement

1. Ltr, 7th AF (DPL) to All Subordinate Commands, subj: Civic Action Operation, Mar 6, 1969.
2. Sharp and Westmoreland, Report on the War in Vietnam, pp. 168-69.
3. Ibid., pp. 9, 157.
4. President's Address to the Nation, Mar 31, 1968, in Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson, 1968-69 (Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Service, 1970), p. 479.
5. As early as May 1968, for example, the communists issued Central Office for South Vietnam Resolution 6, stating their own goals: "The Army and people as a whole must resolutely march forward and engage in a spontaneous uprising to drive out the Americans, overthrow the puppet regime, and turn over the reins of the Government to the people. Create conditions for Pacifist movements in the U.S.A. to expand, and the doves to assail the hawks, thus forcing the U.S.A. to radically change its VN policy." Quoted in Sharp and Westmoreland, Report on the War in Vietnam, p. 168.
6. Ltr, Lt Col S. J. Velarde, Jr., USAF, Chief, Civic Action Division (DPLG) to DCAC, subj: 7AF Civic Action Orientation Briefing, Aug 11, 1969.
7. Memo, CSAF to CINCPACAF, subj: Civic Actions Conference, Jan 6, 1969.
8. Ltr, Brig Gen Richard A. Knobloch, USAF, Deputy Chief of Staff for Plans, to PACOM Commands, subj, PACAF Civic Action Conference Report, May 21, 1968.
9. Ibid.
10. Psychological Operations and Civic Action in Special Air Warfare. *Handbook of Principles and Concepts*, Hq USAF Special Air Warfare Center (TAC), Eglin AFB, Florida, Apr 20, 1967.
11. Ibid., p. ii.
12. Report, PACAF Civic Action Conference, DPL, Mar 68.
13. Ltr, Brig Gen Richard A. Knobloch, USAF, Deputy Chief of Staff for Plans, to PACOM Commands, subj: PACAF Civic Action Conference Report, May 21, 1968.
14. Catalog, USAF Special Operations School (TAC), Hurlburt Field, Florida, Oct 76, p. ii.
15. *Psychological Operations and Civic Action in Special Air Warfare*, p 10-13. Aerial spraying was a case in point. Throughout the war, spraying had been used for several different purposes, some which furthered the economic and social goals of the nation and others which were used in strict support of military operations and which were actually detrimental to the nation-building process. Various insecticides and dusts, for example, were used to control insects and rodents, to deforest areas for new farms, and to provide security along well-travelled highways. On the other hand, defoliants were also used to eliminate Viet Cong hideouts and, in numerous instances, actually to destroy South Vietnamese crops to prevent their falling into the hands of the Viet Cong. South Vietnamese peasants usually did not distinguish among the various uses of aerial sprays and consequently the psychological act was negative: confusion and fear produced resentment toward the government and vulnerability to communist propaganda. To allay some of this hostility, the military often had to use leaflet drops and other educational programs in conjunction with spraying missions. But since defoliation was often used for different purposes, communist propagandists usually

held the advantage.

16. Ltr, Brig Gen Richard A. Knobloch, USAF, Deputy Chief of Staff for Plans, to PACOM Commands subj: PACAF Civic Action Conference Report, May 21, 1968; 7AFR 28-1, 7AF Civic Action Programs, Aug 1, 1968.

17. Hist, 7th AF, Jul-Dec 69, pp. 1, 252.

18. Maj A. W. Thompson, USAF Civic Action in RVN (Proj CHECO, Hickam AFB, Hawaii, 1969), p 17.

19. Staff Study, Dir/Programs, 7th AF (XPP) Seventh Air Force Military Civic Action Program Improvement, Aug 30, 1970.

20. Ltr, Maj Gen Robert L. Pettitt Chief of Staff, 7th AF, to All Subordinate Commands, subj: Continuity of Civic Action Operations, Feb 24, 1969; minutes, 7th AF Civic Action Council Meeting, Aug 7, 1968 intvw, Maj W. J. Prout with Capt Michael Selby, Military Civic Action Officer, Phan Rang AB, RVN, May 14, 1971.

21. Intvw, Maj W. J. Prout with Lt Manfred Koczur, Military Civic Action Officer, Binh Thuy AB, May 26, 1971.

22. Minutes, 7th AF Civic Action Council Meeting, Jun 27, 1967-EOTR, Capt Stanley D. Stephenson, Base Civic Action Officer, Cam Renh Bay, RVN (date not indicated), Aug 14, 1970; Ltr, Col Martin A. Foster, Jr., USAF, Asst Deputy Chief of Staff/Plans (DPLG) to CINCPACAF (DPLPS)F subj: Air Force Civic Action Report. RCS: AF-037, 1 October - 31. December 1968, Jan 18, 1969.

23. Corona Harvest, *Evaluation of Personnel Support of Operations in Southeast Asia*, 1965-1968, II, 2-13 4-42, 4-43.

24. EOTR, Capt Edward G. Stack, Civic Action Coordinator, Bien Hoa AB, RVN, Oct 10, 1968-Oct 29, 1969, Jul 29, 1970; Koczur intvw, May 14, 1971; Selby intvw, May 14, 1971; intvw, Maj W. J. Prout with Capt W. E. Rawcliffe, Military Civil Action Officer, Da Nang AB, RVN, Mar 7, 1-Feb 72, May 24, 1971.

25. EOTR, Capt Joseph P. Conrad, Civic Action Officer, Da Nang AB, RVN, Feb 69-Feb 70, Jul 2, 1970.

26. Staff Study Dir/Programs, 7th AF (XPP)R Seventh Air Force Military Civic Action Program Improvement, Aug 30, 1970; Koczur intvw, May 26, 1971.

27. Ltr, Capt Ernest J. Clark, Base Civic Action Officer, Phu Cat AB, to 7th AF Civic Action Council, subj: Concepts and Thoughts on Culture Civic Action Needs, n.d. [ca. Jan 68]; Civic Action Newsletter, 7th AF Oct 31, 1968.

28. In September 1968, for example, the Air Force found it necessary to circulate a list of "Cultural Dos and Don'ts in Vietnam" to its personnel-stationed there. This time it was eight pages long and it was extracted from a U.S. Army pamphlet (515- 1) which presumably was even longer. See also Arthur J. Hoehn, *The Need for Innovative Approaches for Training in Inter-Cultural interaction* (Professorial Paper 9-68, Department of the Army Office of the Chief of Research and Development, Washington, D.C., 1968).

29. Assessment, AmEmb/J-USPAO, Saigon, Provincial Popular Attitudes on Tet Attacks and Aftermath, Mar 4, 1968, "How U.S. Troops Really Behave in Vietnam." U.S. News & World Report, May 23, 1961, p 17. Ltr, Col. R. R. Melton, Comdr, 12th TFW, to Subordinate Comdrs and Staff, subj: Cain Ranh Air Base Civic Action Program, Dec 2, 1969.

30. Conrad EOTR Jul 2, 1970; USMACV LL 80, US Combat Forces in Support of Pacification, Jun 29, 1970, p 23; ltr, Dyle G. Henning (volunteer worker m Khanh Hoa Province) to Hon. Jonathan B. Bingham (NY), subj: Political Sensitivity of U.S. Troops

- in Vietnam, n.d., in Congressional Record, Jan 21, 1970, pp E202-E205, Gloria Emerson, "Vietnamese Voice Hostility to G.I.'s New York Times, May 2, 1971, p 13.
31. EOTR, Brig Gen John R. Murphy, Assistant Deputy Commander, 7AF/13AF, Udorn RTAFB, Thailand, Jun 65-Jul 66, Jun 15, 1966, p. 19.
32. Ltr, Dyle G. Henning to Hon. Jonathan B. Bingham (NY), subj: Political Sensitivity of U.S. Troops in Vietnam, n.d., in Congressional Record, Jan 21, 1970, pp E202-E203.
33. Ibid., p E203.
34. Catalog, USAF Special Operations School (TAC), Hurlburt Field, Florida, Oct 76, pp ii-iii.
35. EOTR, Col Benjamin S. Preston, Jr, Comdr, 34th TAC Gp, Jul 64; see also MR. Col Winston P. Anderson, Chief, Special Warfare Division Deputy Directorate of Plans for Policy, DCS/P&O, subj: Special Air Warfare Briefing for Marine Corps, Apr 19, 1967.
36. Conrad EOTR, Jul 2, 1970.
37. Msgr CSAF to TAC and others, subj: Psychological Operations/Civic Action Training, (AFXPDP) to Aug 24, 1967; ltr, Maj Gen L. D. Clay, Jr., (AFXPDP) to AFXDC, subj: Psychological Operations, Aug 1, 1967.
38. Psychological Operations and Civic Action in Special. Air Warfare: Information Program. I.(OLQ USAF Special Air Warfare Center (TAC), Eglin AFB, Florida, Apr 15, 1967.
39. Ltr, AFXPDR to AFXDC, subj: Report on Psychological Operations Activities., Dec 4, 1967.
40. Msg, CSAF to TAC *et al*, AFXPDO 76649, subj: Psychological Operations/Civic, Action Training, Jul 7, 1967.
41. Ltr, AFXPDR to TAC (DO), subj: Psychological Operations and Civic Action, Dec 15, 1967.
42. Ibid.
43. Msg, CSAF to TAC, *et al*, subj: Psychological Operations/Civic Action Training, Dec 9, 1967.
44. Intv. Author with Maj Emil Yatsko, Base Civic Action Officer, Bien Hoa AB, RVN, Sep 16, 1971 Jan 31, 1972, Apr 23, 1980.
45. MR. Col Winston P. Anderson, Chief, Special Warfare Division Deputy Directorate of Plans for Policy, DCS/P&O, subj: Special Air Warfare Briefing for Marine Corps, Apr 19, 1967.
46. Daniel J. Loubert, *The Trans-Cultural Research and Training, Institute (TCI)*, (NR-177-238- Human Sciences Research, Inc, McClean, Va, 1967).
47. Arthur J. Hoehn, *The Need for Innovative Approaches for Training in Inter-Cultural Interaction* (Professional Paper 9-68, Department of the Army, Office of the Chief of Research and Development, Washington, 1968).
48. From an unpublished paper by Dr. Robert J. Foster of the Human Sciences Research staff, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 3 , see also Robert J. Foster and Jack Danielian, *An Analysis of Human Relations Training and Implication for Overseas-Performance* (Hum.RRO Technical Report 66-15, Human Sciences Research, Inc, McLean, Va, 1966).
49. Hist, TAC., Jan-Jun 68, I, 23-27.
50. Ibid, p. 26.
51. Ibid, pp 28-29.

52. Ltr, AFXPDR to TAC (DO), subj: Psychological Operations and Civic Action, Dec 15, 1967.
53. Minutes, 7th AF Civic Action Council Meeting, Jan 8, 1968.
54. Minutes, 7th AF Civic Action Council Meeting, Jan 22, 1968.
55. Ltr, Col Kenneth B. Camp (DPOS), Dir of Officer Personnel, DCS/Personnel, PACAF, to 7th AF (DPP), subj: Civic Action Personnel, Mar 20, 1968; minutes, 7th AF Civic Action Council Meeting, Apr 14, 1968.
56. *Civic Action Newsletter*, 7th AF, Feb 28, 1970.
57. Minutes, 7th AF Civic Action Council Meeting, Apr 14, 1968.
58. Staff Summary Sheet, 7th AF (DPLG)T 7AF Civic Action Council Meeting, Nov 12, 1968.
59. Ltr, Col Gail L. Stubbs, Deputy Director for Policy, Director Plans, DCS/P&O (AF's 7PDR) to AFAPD, subj: Report on Psychological Operations Activities, Apr 10, 1968.
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61. MR Lt Col Victor F. Janus, Recorder, 7th AF Civic Action Council, subj: Memoranda of Seventh Air Force Civic Action Council Activities, Mar 19, 1969.
62. Koczur intvw, May 14, 1971; Yatsko intvw, Apr 21, 1990.
63. EOTR Capt Frank J. Valois, Jr., Civic Action Officer with the 14th Special Operations Wing, Phan Rang AB, RVN, Jul 7, 1970.
64. MR. Lt Col Victor F. Janus, Recorder, 7th AF Civic Action Council, subj: Memoranda of Seventh Air Force Civic Action Council Activities, Mar 19, 1969; *Civic Action Newsletter*, 7th AF, Mar 30, 1969.
65. Msg, COMUSMACV to all comds, DTG illegible [ca, Nov 6, 1971 1, subj: MACCORDS Advisor Course; 91 minutes, 7th AF Civic Action Council Meeting, Dec 19-20, 1968; *Civic Action Newsletter*, 7th AF, Aug 11, 1968.
66. USMACV LL 80 US Combat Forces in Support of Pacification, Jun 29, 1970, p 23.
67. MACV Directive 360-3, Command Information, Oct 6, 1967.
68. *Civic Action Newsletter*, 7th AF, Dec 26, 1967.
69. Minutes, 7th AF Civic Action Council Meeting, Jan 8, 1968 and Jan 22, 1968.
70. Command Correspondence Staff Summary Sheet, 7th AF (DPLG), Civic Action Program, Mar 27, 1968.
71. Ibid., minutes, Seventh Air Force Civic Action Council Meeting, Mar 28, 1968; USAF Military Civic Action Semiannual Report (DCS/Plans and Operations, USAF, Oct 68), pp 25, 32.
72. Ltr, Lt Col S. J. Velarde, Jr., Chief, Civic Action Division (DPLG), to DOAC, subj: 7AF Civic Action Orientation Briefing, Aug 11, 1969.
73. Min, 7th AF Civic Action Council Meeting, Apr 14, 1967, Oct 13, 1967, and Nov 12, 1968; ltr, 7th AF to 600 Photo Squadron, subj: Distribution of PS-8/52 "Building a Nation," Mar 2, 1968; MR, Lt Col Victor F. Janus, Recorder, 7th AF Civic Action Council, subj: Memoranda of Seventh Air Force Civic Action Council Activities, Mar 19, 1969.
74. *USAF Military Civic Action Semiannual Report (DCS/Plans and Operations, USAF, Oct 68)*, p. 31.
75. Talk Paper, Civic Action Division; 7th AF 7AF Civic Action, n.d.
76. Minutes, 7th AF Civic Action Council Meeting, Aug 7, 1968; *Civic Action Newsletter*, 7th AF, Oct 31, 1963.
77. Stephenson EOTR, Aug 14, 1970.

78. MR Col Jack Knight, DCS/Personnel, 7th AF, no subj, n.d. (atch to ltr. Col Jack Knight (DP) to CINCPACAF (DPA), subj: Assignment and Training of 7AF Civic Action Officers, AFSC 0316, Dec 15, 1968).

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80. Report, 7th AF (DPLG) to CINCPACAF (DPLPS), Air Force Civic Action Report, RCS: AF-037, Jul 1-Sep 30, 1968.

81. Staff Summary Sheet, 7th AF DPLG, Proposed Agenda for Civic Action Council Meeting, Nov 11, 1968, Civic Action Newsletter 7th AF, Oct 31, 1968, Selby intvw, May 14, 1971.

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CHAPTER VII

REDEFINING SEVENTH AIR FORCE CIVIC ACTION

The rebuilding of South Vietnam by the Vietnamese is the primary goal of the Vietnamese Government's Revolutionary Development Program. The Vietnamese will need assistance in this major undertaking and we will help provide that assistance through our civic action program. The Seventh Air Force Civic Action Program will be realigned and expanded as necessary to more closely complement the Revolutionary Development Program.

—General William W. Momyer¹

While the Seventh Air Force was refining its civic action program to enable it to respond more adequately to the needs of the South Vietnamese, some of the responsibilities and goals of the program underwent change as well. In the government manuals and Air Force regulations, the formal definition of military civic action remained the same. Yet in the months and years following the Tet offensive, its role in the war effort was changed and reoriented enough to constitute a redefinition.

The roots for this redefinition lay in the Vietnamese government's pacification program and the American decision to pin its hopes on that program as the ultimate means of bringing the war to a successful conclusion. The Viet Cong's control over large parts of the countryside had always been a thorny problem for the South Vietnamese. Whatever else was required for dealing with the insurgents, it was essential that the government reassert its control over those rural areas. To this end, successive regimes had attempted various pacification schemes involving military as well as civil processes. These ranged from Diem's Agrovilles in the late 1950s through the Strategic Hamlet program of 1961-1963, and the New Life Hamlets of his successors. Although all these measures were big on promises, each proved inadequate and transitory and was conducted on an exceedingly small scale when compared with the effort put into the conventional war. None were given sufficient resources and funds, all were plagued by mismanagement and gross corruption, and each failed to provide the key ingredient of adequate police protection and local security.² In assessing their failure, Robert W. Komer, President Johnson's special advisor on pacification, reported that "the Viet Cong have been able to sink their roots deep into the fabric of rural Vietnam. Insecurity, poverty, low health standards, lack of opportunity, social injustice, and land inequities have enabled the Viet Cong to exploit a rural feeling of alienation from the government."³

The year 1966, however, saw a renewed determination by the South Vietnamese government, prodded by its American advisors, to broaden its political base among the rural population.⁴ Hope was especially high on a new plan for "revolutionary development" based on a three-phased approach to pacification.⁵ The concept called for coordinated military and civic actions to liberate the people from Viet Cong control, restore public security, and initiate political, economic, and social development programs to improve the material well-being of the rural people.⁶ The developmental

phase of the plan was to be carried out by U.S. civilian and military civic action teams and Vietnamese revolutionary development cadres. The latter were groups of fifty-nine workers (some of them women), trained to reassert the government's authority by assisting the hamlet population on local construction projects and self-help programs, and armed to protect themselves from enemy attack, secure the village, and train the peasants in self-defense. They also met with the people to discuss local politics, to organize elections, and to try to whip up enthusiasm for Saigon's leadership with patriotic songs and speeches. The women on the team were trained mainly as nurses and village primary school teachers. The announced goal was to place 30,000 of these cadresmen (approximately 600 teams) in some 300 hamlets by 1967. After staying six months in their assigned areas, the teams would then move on to additional hamlets, leaving a nucleus behind to carry on the program. Each team could thereby pacify about two hamlets a year.⁷

Despite a promising start, this program also began to falter before long. There were more than 12,000 hamlets in South Vietnam, but by the beginning of 1967, the government had been able to train only about 400 teams to perform all the pacification functions required.⁸ And even these few teams were not getting the necessary military protection and political support they needed because of the constant military threat presented by the Viet Cong.⁹ Moreover, they were scattered around the countryside without any apparent pattern. What little they were able to accomplish under such circumstances quickly dissipated. As a result, the morale of the team members was low and the desertion rate frequently as high as forty percent.¹⁰ Many of the cadre who did not desert were reluctant to remain in their assigned hamlets overnight. Their fears were not groundless. By mid-1967, over 200 team members had been killed, 300 wounded, and 60 listed as missing in action.¹¹ Another problem was the lack of coordination and cooperation within the Vietnamese government. Revolutionary development involved a host of complementary, small-scale operations scattered among competing government agencies. These included economic aid for rural areas, rehabilitation and resettlement of refugees, expansion of the police field force, and election of village chiefs. In some of these fields there was no effective cooperation within the government; in others, the cooperation was less than adequate. Still other problems developed from the fact that the developmental teams, in carrying out the reforms that were part of their assigned missions, often challenged the authoritative position of the government's appointed officials. Compounding these essentially South Vietnamese difficulties were severe administrative problems within the U.S. pacification program, and above all, feelings within both the U.S. and Vietnamese military establishments that, in reality, pacification was a matter to be handled by civilian agencies.¹²

The actions taken by the two allied governments to combat these deficiencies resulted in what came to be called the "new model" pacification program. The name is highly misleading. The approach and objectives of this program were not new at all, but were, in fact, largely imitative of all the previous pacification efforts. What was new, however, was that this was the first large-scale, comprehensive program to be tried in Vietnam and the only one to receive sufficient manning, resources, and funds to be able to compete seriously with the Viet Cong for the loyalties of the South Vietnamese people.¹³

The first efforts at "remodeling" occurred in October 1966, when President Johnson met with Vietnamese leaders at Manila. Rural security was a major topic, and

President Johnson handled this by getting the Vietnamese to commit the bulk of their forces to pacification. These forces could then be used to provide security for the revolutionary development teams and to clear-and-hold areas after U.S. search-and-destroy operations had done their job of killing the enemy.¹⁴ Clear-and-hold operations, it was reasoned, could best be performed by indigenous forces since the cleared areas would ultimately have to be taken over by these forces.¹⁵ In the words of the communiqué issued on October 25, these Vietnamese troops would "provide a shield behind which a new society [could] be built."¹⁶ This action reflected the growing realization that adequate security was the indispensable first step toward achieving success in pacification. But it also represented the beginning of a major reversal of strategy. Whereas engaging the main force communist units had previously been viewed as the crux of the task in Vietnam, defeating the guerrillas and severing their lifeline with the people now began to be emphasized as the major problem. At the November 1966 commanders' conference, for example, General Westmoreland told his audience, "In your discussion with your counterparts, stress the point that, in Revolutionary Development, the destruction of guerrillas and the VC [Viet Cong] infrastructure is more important in disrupting the enemy's overall efforts than is destruction of main force units. It hurts the enemy twice as much to lose a guerrilla as opposed to losing main force personnel."¹⁷ And according to the plans laid down at Manila, no longer would American commanders be rated only on how many enemy they killed, how much ground they took, or how many bombs they dropped. Rather they would be required to show how much influence they were helping South Vietnamese leaders win in the villages.¹⁸ Speaking again to his field commanders, Westmoreland remarked that the major job of the Vietnamese military was working with the people to gain their confidence. But since these men usually took a superior, aloof attitude toward civilians, Americans had to help them change their attitude. "It is self-defeating," Westmoreland noted, "if we fail to gain the confidence of the people in the [military], which is supposed to assist and protect them,"¹⁹

On the same day that the Manila communiqué was issued, the Air Staff directed the Special Warfare Division to develop a plan for the use of air operations in Vietnam under the conditions that were outlined in this joint statement. The result was a "Basic Plan and Concept of Operations," completed in November. To support the revolutionary development program, USAF personnel were to provide airlift services to the Vietnamese government and U. military and civilian agencies in Vietnam engaged in pacification. They were also to perform civil engineering tasks; provide medical, dental, and veterinary services; undertake psychological operations; and engage in numerous other civic activities to improve the standard of living of the Vietnamese people. It was proposed that the reconnaissance capability of the Air Force would support revolutionary development by reconnoitering infiltration routes to provide warning of imminent enemy activity, and doing mapping and surveying for land and agricultural programs. Aerial spraying of insecticides would also be used to increase the effectiveness of these same land programs as well as to help control communicable diseases.²⁰ By the end of 1966, these concepts began to have an impact in Vietnam when the Seventh Air Force civic action division began to refocus its efforts on projects which complemented the government's revolutionary development program in the environs of Seventh Air Force bases.²¹

In December, another milestone in the development of the "new model" pacification program was reached when a new administrative organization became functional.

Called the Office of Civil Operations and directed by Deputy Ambassador Porter, this new body was responsible for bringing all U.S. civilian agencies engaged in pacification together in a centralized effort to support and advise the South Vietnamese government on revolutionary development.²² Once in operation, it was expected to have a simplifying and consolidating effect on the American civilian contribution and thereby to solve numerous problems which had plagued the effort in the past.²³ Managerial problems on the military side were also tackled toward the end of 1966. By mid-summer of that year, it had become clear that requirements for liaison visits, inspection trips, and related reports were putting a severe strain on the small pacification staff within the Military Assistance Command. Consequently, a new directorate within that command was established in November to supervise the increased American military participation in the pacification program.²⁴

At the Guam conference a few months later, in March 1967, South Vietnam had 54 of its 145 battalions engaged in pacification. But results were still almost imperceptible.²⁵ The South Vietnamese showed a distinct lack of enthusiasm for night work and a noticeable disregard for the villagers' feelings and property during the day. Two constant complaints by civic workers were that they were still unsure about protection and that misbehavior by South Vietnamese troops was spoiling their work.²⁶

At least part of the blame for this lack of tangible results, however, could be placed on the United States. The U.S. military was still preoccupied with the main force war, not with the war in the villages and hamlets. It preferred to use its men to engage the enemy in combat, not to protect South Vietnamese pacification teams.²⁷ And although the rhetoric existed to support an intensified pacification campaign, there was little significant relationship between announced goals and their execution. A clearly delineated plan defining roles for U.S. forces in support of the Vietnamese pacification program was needed, as well as more U.S. advisors to work directly with the revolutionary development teams. Moreover, in the civilian sector, confusion and fractionalization were rapidly becoming the hallmarks of the U.S. pacification effort. Eighteen months after the United States had pledged all-out support for "social revolution" in South Vietnam, intense bureaucratic rivalries, duplication, waste, and sheer maladministration precluded any significant progress.²⁸ Two events soon helped to change this situation. The first was the implementation of the 1967 Combined Campaign Plan which had been promulgated in November. By strongly emphasizing pacification for the first time, the plan represented a major step in the direction of integrating military and pacification efforts. It set forth two primary goals for Vietnamese, United States, and Free World forces: seeking out and destroying communist forces by unrelenting pressure across the board, and extending South Vietnamese government control throughout the country by civil and military operations in support of pacification. Although the Vietnamese were assigned primary responsibility for supporting revolutionary development, and the United States was given the main mission of defeating main Viet Cong/North Vietnamese forces, the plan stated that there would be no clear cut division of responsibility.²⁹ U.S. military forces were in fact, assigned civic tasks in direct support of Vietnamese revolutionary development. One pertinent section of the plan, for example, called on American forces to "conduct, in coordination with sector and subsector commanders, military civic action to help win the support of the people for the government with emphasis to ensure that credit is given to the GVN. If U.S. troops are available to pitch in and 'get their hands dirty,' an excellent example will be set for the Vietnamese troops who

have been inclined in the past to look down on participation with the people in manual labor."³⁰

Continued dissatisfaction with the grindingly slow pace of the "village war" led to another major managerial innovation which dramatically changed the military's role in the pacification process: the formation of the office of Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support.³¹ After the Guam conference with South Vietnamese leaders, President Johnson promoted Robert Komer to ambassadorial rank and placed him in Saigon as Westmoreland's deputy for pacification. Komer's first job was to reorganize the U.S. pacification program, bringing the concerned military and civilian agencies together for the first time under the new CORDS office. Specifically the new deputy was charged with supervising the formulation and execution of all plans, policies, and programs for all U.S. support of the Vietnamese revolutionary development program. The effort was to be the most comprehensive one ever undertaken by the United States to integrate interagency nation-building assistance.³²

The consolidation of these functions under military control was considered logical not only because pacification required a restoration of security, which only the military could provide, but also because the greater part of the men, money, and transportation needed to carry out the task belonged to the military. Moreover, the Vietnamese government had already lost almost all control of the areas needing to undergo pacification, and what little administration still existed in those parts had long since become largely military in character.³³ It was Komer's own judgment that "this marriage of U.S. civilian and military personnel and resources was one of the managerial keys to such success as we had in pacification—an imaginative response to the atypical nature of the Vietnam war."³⁴

With this reorganization, the military now became officially and directly responsible for what had previously been considered primarily a civilian domain in Vietnam. The civic action program could stand only to gain from this move. Its supporters had long understood that pacification—and all that it entailed, from providing security for the people, to constructing their schools and educating them in the principles of self-help and self-government—was as much a military process and responsibility as a civilian one, especially under severe wartime conditions.³⁵ Ellsworth Bunker, the U.S. Ambassador to South Vietnam, called the transfer of pacification from civilian to military control "unprecedented...a unique experiment in a unique situation."³⁶ And there were many civilian and military personnel who had strong doubts about the wisdom in the rearrangement. Questions, for example, were continually raised about the ability of the military to handle adequately the often delicate political aspects of the program and to work successfully with civilians. Despite these doubts, however, military civic action personnel now had an official stamp of approval for their program, and an officially acknowledged role in the war.³⁷

Under military management and the new CORDS office, pacification of the South Vietnamese countryside proceeded better than anyone had expected. Measuring success was an admitted problem and only rough (and often highly criticized)³⁸ estimates were possible, but the trend was definitely upwards.³⁹ According to a new Hamlet Evaluation System devised in late 1966 to replace subjective narrative reports of progress, the United States estimated, for example, that the percentage of population living in "relatively secure areas" went from fifty-six to sixty-seven percent during 1967. This represented an increase of approximately 1.3 million people.⁴⁰ A

closer look at these figures, however, revealed that more than half the rural population still lived in "contested" areas or areas controlled completely by the Viet Cong. Moreover, many hamlets had moved back and forth between Vietnamese government and Viet Cong control. This was caused by the fact that the government still lacked sufficient security forces to guarantee protection.⁴¹

Nonetheless, in the final analysis, pacification seemed to be working. By the end of 1967, the number of revolutionary development teams had risen to more than 500, and the desertion rate had dropped to about two percent a month. Prospects looked good for increased progress during 1968.⁴²

The U.S. Air Force shared this general feeling of optimism about the direction that pacification was taking, with the Secretary of the Air Force claiming that his branch of the American military was making "a significant contribution, through noncombatant civic action, to the fundamental objective of securing peace and building up the Vietnamese nation."⁴³ Throughout 1967, the Seventh Air Force civic action division had worked to redefine its program to support South Vietnamese revolutionary development more closely, to integrate its efforts into the general pacification program outlined by the Military Assistance Command, and to perform those actions outlined in the Special Warfare Division's "Basic Plan and Concept of Operations," developed in November 1966. By the middle of that year, for example, each unit was engaging in specific civic action projects to stimulate the political, economic, and social growth of South Vietnam, and Air Force pilots were providing increased airlift support to the Agency for International Development and to Vietnamese government forces engaged in pacification—with some of the supplies receiving priorities equal to military cargo.⁴⁴

In June 1967, Headquarters USAF promulgated an additional plan to provide further guidance and information on U.S. Air Force activities which could be used to complement the revolutionary development effort. It was scheduled for implementation on January 1, 1968. The new plan, in part, was a reiteration of the suggestions made in November 1966, with the added recommendation that the Air Force effort be expanded considerably. A major difference, however, was the emphasis placed on civic activities after the withdrawal of U.S. combatant forces. The plan noted that the ultimate objective of revolutionary development was establishing a political and emotional link between the Vietnamese people and the central government—something that only the Vietnamese themselves could effectively accomplish. The degree of success in military civic action would be measured by the degree to which indigenous personnel assumed responsibility for and operation of individual projects. The major job facing Air Force civic personnel was, therefore, the paradoxical one of working themselves out of a job.⁴⁵

The plan, nonetheless, proposed an important role for Air Force personnel; and it was expected that, after an initial expansion, U.S. support for pacification would continue at a relatively constant level through 1970. But after that date, as Vietnamese capabilities increased, active participation by Americans would decrease considerably. Working with and training Vietnamese personnel was thus seen as "fundamental" to the long term success of pacification. In contrast to previous developments in the Seventh Air Force's civic program, then, it was stressed that, whenever possible, U.S. revolutionary development activities should be conducted in concert with Vietnamese forces or government agencies. "It is not necessary that the Vietnamese members of revolutionary development teams have the ability to perform

the required task initially," the plan stated.

It is important, however, that they participate with U.S. teams/ personnel both to learn the techniques and skills being employed and to provide visible evidence that the Government of Vietnam is responsible for the benefits resulting from the program. Any U.S. activities which must be conducted unilaterally should be clearly identified to the local populace as sponsored and directed by the Vietnamese Government before the activity begins.⁴⁶

For a similar reason, it was stressed that the U. Air Force should avoid the initiation of projects that could only be supported by the indefinite presence of U.S. forces: "Projects for which the Vietnamese have no capability may be initiated but care must be taken that the program includes training of Vietnamese to assume the role at some later time."⁴⁷

With this guidance from USAF headquarters, the Seventh Air Force continued throughout the remainder of 1967 to integrate its civic program with the Vietnamese government's pacification plans. Airlift services continued to increase, and programs both to supply materials to widely dispersed revolutionary development teams and to provide technical assistance to Vietnamese pacification personnel operating in the vicinity of Seventh Air Force bases gathered momentum. Encouraged by the enthusiasm of national command authorities, lower division commanders at the unit level gradually began to take more interest in civic action as well. In several instances, hit-and-miss, low impact programs became stronger and more effective.⁴⁸ As base civic action programs were revised, nation-building efforts were focused more on encouragement and support of self-help by the Vietnamese to better themselves and to achieve self sufficiency. Particular attention was focused on improvement of local socioeconomic conditions. USAF workers would provide supplies and technical advice, while the community residents would initiate the projects and supply the labor. Working with Vietnamese Air Force personnel and encouraging them to assist themselves and to increase their civic action efforts also continued.⁴⁹

The establishment of the CORDS organization in 1967 aided the Air Force tremendously in undergoing this transition. Air Force civic action personnel could now look to local and regional CORDS advisors for support and direction. And closer coordination with CORDS provided access to many projects desired by the local Vietnamese government and great assistance in following up on projects.⁵⁰ In addition, the requirement levied on the Seventh Air Force civic action division to make monthly reports to the CORDS office and to coordinate its activities with CORDS teams helped to insure the emergence of a program designed to complement South Vietnamese revolutionary development.⁵¹ The Tet offensive interrupted the progress of pacification as well as this process of redefinition to a large extent. As described earlier, heavy fighting throughout South Vietnam disrupted normal civic action activity. Long-term developmental projects were shelved and Air Force resources were channeled into ad hoc humanitarian efforts aimed at stabilizing the country and helping it to recover from the debilitating attacks. These actions by the Seventh Air Force were representative of what happened to pacification throughout the country. As the government's own revolutionary development forces vacated their targeted hamlets to defend the towns, rural security plummeted. This led many to conclude too hastily

that the whole pacification program had fallen apart at the seams. This was not the case.⁵² The Viet Cong, seriously hurt by the offensive themselves, failed to capitalize on the situation and consolidate their rural gains. A power vacuum developed in much of the countryside, leaving most of the previous pacification assets intact and paving the way for the rapid return of government forces.⁵³

By mid-year, the urban recovery effort had also been completed. As humanitarian operations ceased to dominate the Seventh Air Force civic action officers was held to examine base programs and realign them where necessary.⁵⁴ Communications from CORDS encouraged this transition:

The hard-core of the Revolutionary Development effort is not to provide an assortment of goodies, be they cement, artifacts or social services to the people. The hard-core of the RD [Revolutionary Development] Program is to win the people over to the point where they will obey, trust and participate in their own government. Humanitarian activities, while having an immediate civic action effect is, for our political and social purposes, guide irrelevant to the larger aim of the GVN. In fact, where civic action has taken place in a context that draws popular attention from GVN efforts, or tends to provide an unfavorable comparison between the GVN and American presence, civic action may be actually counterproductive to the American presence in Vietnam.⁵⁵

Instructions from the Seventh Air Force Chief of Staff provided the same counsel, urging unit commanders to have their civic action personnel work through local officials and help the Vietnamese initiate and conduct their own projects.⁵⁶ The Seventh Air Force Commander was equally impressed with the necessity for revamping the command's civic action program in such a way as to "insure that projects fill an important local need and are conducted in a manner to identify the people with their government."⁵⁷ Note was made of a civic action project in which fifty-two schools were built in a province and then the Vietnamese government was expected to provide teachers. After many months, most of the schools were empty, the people were frustrated, and the government had lost face in the eyes of local residents. The advice given was to never start something that can't be finished and certainly never place the GVN in a position of having to support U.S. forces.⁵⁸

Recommendations from all other quarters as well suggested that American military personnel—while continuing to be the driving force behind certain civic projects—were to step to the sideline, allowing the Vietnamese both to assume responsibility for the projects that were initiated and then to take the credit for any positive accomplishments which might result. In an explicit directive to the Seventh Air Force, CORDS urged, for instance, that civic action elements "categorically stay out of" hamlets in which Vietnamese pacification workers were concentrating their efforts and that projects undertaken by American civic action units should "require absolutely no support" from the United States after an initial period.⁵⁹ Advice from the Navy to other American units engaged in civic action was similar: "We are here to help the Government of Vietnam to help itself, not force the populace to accept our ideas."⁶⁰

This resolve among American civic action personnel, then, was one important consequence of the enemy's Tet offensive.⁶¹ And by the fall of 1968, the Seventh Air

Force civic action division could report that its program had developed to the point where each project supported the government's revolutionary development program and that the role of base civic action officers had progressed to where they served as program directors rather than participants in each project. This enabled them not only to conduct more projects but also to develop a more objective view of the entire base program. In line with the post-Tet policies set by CORDS, more emphasis was also being placed on using Vietnamese ideas and labor, backed by U.S. Air Force material, commodities, financial help, and technical assistance. Most projects by this time, too, were being coordinated with provincial officials through the CORDS senior advisor, before the commitment of USAF resources.⁶²

An even more important outgrowth of the Tet campaign, however, was that it galvanized the Vietnamese into action, making Vietnamization and ultimately American withdrawal both more feasible and more essential than at any other time in the Southeast Asian conflict.⁶³ The negative reaction in the United States to the Viet Cong offensive made the South Vietnamese government realize that it could no longer depend on an ever-expanding U.S. commitment and that if pacification were ever to succeed, it would have to show more determination and shoulder more of the responsibility.

As a result of this realization, the government issued a general mobilization order, and during 1968 alone, Vietnamese Regional Forces and Popular Forces expanded by more than one hundred thousand men. Taking advantage of the popular upsurge of anti-Viet Cong feeling generated by the Tet attacks, President Thieu also revived the old practice of training and arming the people for their own defense and organizing them into the People's Self Defense Force. This last action lay at the heart of a successful pacification program, demonstrating to the citizenry in a most tangible way that their government trusted them and depended on them to secure the country from insurgent elements. The formation of these informal militia groups also released regular South Vietnamese units and some American units to handle the larger problems in the area.⁶⁴

Capping off these vigorous actions aimed at augmenting the country's defenses and counteracting the adverse impact of the enemy's winter-spring offenses was a special three-month effort formalized in the "accelerated pacification campaign." It was to begin on November 1, 1968 and was scheduled to run through January 1969. The major goal of the campaign was to increase the population under Saigon's control to a minimum of eighty percent. This would be accomplished by a thin, but rapid expansion of pacification to some one thousand contested hamlets. It was in these hamlets that a skeletal organization of the people already existed, loyalties were still malleable, and a solid security presence could be easily established.⁶⁵ All available resources (military, paramilitary, and civilian) were to be used in this stepped-up effort to exploit the enemy's military weaknesses and spoil his efforts to win by political means what he could not win militarily. The decision to undertake the campaign had the strong backing of the United States. At the end of September, the Military Assistance Command sent a special message to U.S. military organizations in South Vietnam urging them to support the effort with all available resources and providing them the necessary operational guidance.⁶⁶

One important aspect of the accelerated pacification program was a concentrated attack on the communists' political and administrative infrastructure in the villages.⁶⁷ By the fall of 1968, intelligence reports indicated that the Viet Cong were devoting

considerable effort to building up their political base in rural areas and forming new local battalions.⁶⁸ This enabled them to terrorize their opponents, set up a shadow government that collected taxes, established schools, and effectively ruled vast areas of the countryside. A submerged communist infrastructure also meant reduced security for military forces engaged in civic action. It impeded freedom of movement and discouraged wholehearted participation by the populace in self-help programs.⁶⁹ If the Vietnamese war was as much a political as a military conflict—as civic action and pacification advocates contended—then the South Vietnamese government could not hope to build up and protect a loyal administrative structure at the grassroots level when that of the enemy continued to predominate and was in a position to terrorize the people.

To preempt any of the enemy's plans to tighten his grip on the rural population, and also to consolidate its own post-Tet gains, the South Vietnamese government stepped up a n operation called Phung Hoa (or Phoenix) which had gotten underway in 1967 but which had proved largely ineffective up to that point. This unconventional, police-type program utilized guerrilla tactics (with air support) to identify, locate, and arrest the Viet Cong militia, tax collectors, and political agents; to try suspects in South Vietnamese courts; and to imprison or eliminate those found guilty. Teams of twenty-eight men (all Vietnamese) carried out the project. These armed men, trained in military and civic action techniques and clad in black cotton peasant garments, moved into the villages, secured them, and lived with the people for prolonged periods. And under the new, accelerated effort, they were directed to conduct local elections, improve the administrative organization, initiate at least one self-help project per hamlet designed to stimulate the rural economy, and resettle any refugees who might be situated in the area.⁷⁰ As the villagers gained confidence in these government teams, they would inform against the Viet Cong, giving the names of tax men, terrorists, and assassins.⁷¹ The goal set during the three-month accelerated pacification campaign was to eliminate one 1,000 of these infrastructure personnel per month.⁷² The program actually proved much more successful than that, neutralizing some 6,169 during the last quarter of 1968.⁷³

The U.S. military had a supporting role in the Phoenix program.⁷⁴ It was funded by the Civic Action vision of the CORDS Community Development Directorate and administered by the CORDS Civic Action Division.⁷⁵ American military personnel served as advisors.⁷⁶ When the undertaking was first initiated, the Joint Chiefs of Staff tasked each of the military services to provide fifty junior officers during 1967 and 1968. It was suggested that the personnel be volunteers who had served previously as advisors in South Vietnam or in similar capacities elsewhere. After completing six months of intensive training, they would be assigned for eighteen months of field work either as provincial representatives, advisors to the South Vietnamese training program, or liaison officers with U.S. and Vietnamese military and civilian authorities. The Air Force Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel requested the USAF Military Personnel Center to accept nominations for the Air Force positions and to implement the program by January 16, 1967, After an initial screening of candidates, however, the Air Force found only four acceptable officers. The major problem was the recurring one of insufficient training and lack of other related qualifications. The other services consequently, had to fill the remaining 146 slots.⁷⁷

Even after the U.S. and the Vietnamese governments pledged increased support for the Phoenix program, it continued to suffer from many weaknesses.⁷⁸ By July of

1969, however, after it was reorganized as a special directorate under CORDS, it began to show considerable success in some areas. And by February 1971, the group monitoring Vietnamese activities on the U.S. National Security Council estimated that the program had freed some 2,000 of the 2,300 villages in South Vietnam from control by the Viet Cong's political-administrative apparatus.⁷⁹ These figures were no doubt inflated, as were other estimates of the war's progress. Nevertheless, other sources as well seemed to substantiate the fact that the Phoenix program severely damaged the communist infrastructure in South Vietnam's rural villages. One South Vietnamese general who had a responsible position in the pacification campaign, for example, later termed the program a "reasonable success." He estimated that out of a recorded strength of 40,000 by 1971, the Viet Cong infrastructure suffered 5,615 members killed, 4,391 detained, and 5,597 defected—or a total of more than one-third of its ranks.⁸⁰

Although the Air Force's advisory role in Operation Phoenix turned out to be smaller than originally planned, it set a much better record in supporting other aspects of the government's accelerated pacification drive. In addition to reestablishing the country's self-defense capability and nullifying the communists' grassroots political structure, the Saigon government also set the goal of building up more self-reliant administrations at the village and hamlet level as part of its intensified pacification campaign. Other necessities flowed from these three priorities: continuing the resettlement of refugees; improving the attractiveness of the Ghieu Hoi program; stimulating the rural economy; stepping-up its propaganda appeals; and increasing its support for various other programs designed to develop the country, improve the life of the peasant, and win his allegiance. It was in these areas that the Air Force chose to concentrate its civic efforts.⁸¹ The program which the Seventh Air Force civic action division developed in support of the accelerated pacification campaign had one central objective: consolidating Saigon's control over all the hamlets and villages which lay within the "rocket belt" of Seventh Air Force bases—an area stretching between ten and fifteen miles of each base's perimeter. This territory had been assigned to the Seventh Air Force by Vietnamese government officials and the CORDS office to eliminate duplication of effort among different organizations and to improve continuity.⁸² Occasionally joint projects were undertaken there also with other branches of the military and with various civilian agencies, but, by and large, it was the Air Force's exclusive domain.⁸³

Several dimensions of pacification required extensive use of the special capabilities of air power, and requests for the Air Force's help in these areas carried civic action personnel and volunteers outside the confines of their air base perimeters. Such activities, however, were closely monitored by national pacification officials.⁸⁴ Airlift support, for example, was provided throughout the length and breadth of South Vietnam, as were photographic services, spraying for insect and malaria control, and medical evacuations. At times, too, special requests from provincial and district advisors, and the existence of emergencies or other popular needs outside of the ten-mile radius, would lead to ground-based projects as far as twenty or thirty miles away from the base.⁸⁵

When the South Vietnamese government announced its accelerated pacification plans, the commander of the Seventh Air Force immediately sent a personal message to all his unit commanders directing full USAF support for local pacification projects.⁸⁶ To handle the increased demands for Air Force services in this regard, the special

imprest fund for military civic action and psychological warfare operations was increased from 100,000 piasters to 250,000 piasters for each base. And for the first time, base commanders were authorized to approve civic action projects provide the USAF share did not exceed \$1,000 in appropriated funds.⁸⁷ This liberal policy and the increase in available funds enabled base commanders to respond more rapidly to demands from CORDS advisors or the South Vietnamese for specific pacification projects. The Air Force's quick reaction, in turn, produced not only a closer working relationship; between USAF personnel and other local officials involved with pacification, but also made possible a better coordinated, more effective program.⁸⁸

By the end of the three-month accelerated pacification drive, for example, the cycle leading to the assignment of responsibility for a civic action project to a specific squadron or unit had become very effective. A master list of suggested projects was prepared by CORDS and Vietnamese government officials from hamlet requests for assistance in community development. The master list was then evaluated by a joint civic action coordinating committee, and projects considered appropriate for military civic action were assigned to one of the U.S. or Free World military units in the area. Projects assigned to a specific air base were then reassigned by the base civic action council to an appropriate base unit, and responsibility for assistance or monitorship was concurrently assumed by the base civic action officer. This procedure made it possible for civic action personnel to insure both off-base and on-base coordination, to avoid waste because of duplication, and to ascertain that authorized materials from CORDS would be provided on schedule.⁸⁹

Most of the pacification projects assumed by or assigned to the Air Force fell into one of five categories: refugee/returnee resettlement and rehabilitation, medical assistance, economic development, education and training, and public administration. Seventh Air Force work with refugees was an on-going project; the flood of homeless left by the Tet offensive represented only a fraction of those uprooted by the war. The existence of large numbers of refugees can disrupt any society. But in South Vietnam, where high hopes were pinned on a successful pacification campaign, and where the ability of the government to win popular support could determine the outcome of the war, caring for these war victims became a vital necessity. Following Operation Recovery, the Air Force continued to sponsor humanitarian projects and to provide material support for the Vietnamese government's refugee relief programs, but these projects were not the main focus of Air Force concern. Rather, emphasis shifted to more long term developmental programs aimed at helping the refugees find permanent homes and become more self-sufficient.

A few examples will show the variety of programs undertaken. Tuy Hoa Air Base concentrated its efforts on providing vocational training at the nearby Dong Tac Refugee Center. The curriculum consisted of courses in automotive mechanics, electrical work, carpentry, woodworking, sewing, tailoring, barbering, and plumbing. The instructors were Vietnamese. The base provided surplus materials, tools, and training aids. The civic action office, for instance, arranged to have eleven condemned vehicles donated to the Center where they were used as instructional aids in an advanced mechanics class. By participating in these classes, refugee students significantly increased their chances of finding gainful employment. Many of the graduates were hired as civilian personnel on base and did extremely well on their jobs.⁹⁰

The Seventh Air Force agricultural program was particularly successful at several camps. A major complaint among many refugees was that they had no work and very

little food. Many times these same people were located near fertile, but untilled land. On several occasions USAF airmen distributed seeds, fertilizer, and tools for successful farm projects. At Pleiku, for example, base volunteers taught Montagnards how to prepare, plant, and care for a vegetable garden. The seeds and fertilizer used on the project were paid for with money from the bases civic action fund.⁹¹ At another base, airmen provided technical assistance and material support to a group of refugee youth interested in starting a pig raising project.⁹²

The men at Tan Son Nhut Air Base became involved in a dynamic program to resettle some ten thousand people in their former homes. These South Vietnamese citizens had been displaced by the 1968 Tet offensive and, in search for security, had congregated in the urban areas of Go Vap district. Together, Air Force and Navy civic action teams helped them return to seven hamlets in the surrounding rural area and rebuild their homes. The Air Force's civil engineers donated cement and labor, and the bases civic action imprest fund was used to procure the laterite.⁹³ USAF aid to the government's Chieu Hoi program was in many ways similar to that given to the refugees. Like the refugees, the Hoi Chanh needed medical and dental care, they were homeless and needed to be resettled, and many times they lacked the vocational skills necessary to become productive and loyal members of South Vietnamese society. Since a major goal of the accelerated pacification campaign was to substantially increase the number of Viet Cong defectors over past attempts, the government had to make its amnesty program more attractive and offer these people a real alternative to continuing their fight against the government.

Again, Air Force participation led to a variety of different programs. The Binh Dinh Chieu Hoi Center, for example, was rated by the Vietnamese Minister of Chieu Hoi as the best in South Vietnam, and Phu Cat Air Base received much of the credit. The base was a strong supporter of the center and furnished materials for various projects, among them an automotive mechanics course. The success of the course was based on proper planning, execution, and the self-motivation of the trainees. Each student was provided a fourteen-page study guide (in Vietnamese); an old engine was obtained for use as a training aid; and instructions were provided by base personnel three days a week. The trainees realized that the successful completion of the course would provide them with the knowledge of a skill that was in demand and would result in jobs with higher than average wages. The students in the pilot course became so enthusiastic, they requested that classes be conducted five or six times a week. Duty commitments of the instructors, however, precluded additional sessions.⁹⁴

The Phu Cat civic action office was also instrumental in helping the Binh Dinh center become more self-sufficient in terms of food supplies. The center's chicken coops and rabbit and pig pens were all built with wire and framing supplied by the base. And in an effort to augment the center's wood supplies, the base indirectly contributed to the growth of the compound's cattle herd. The Chieu Hoi center had previously purchased all its own firewood. Donations of scrap lumber from the base, however, allowed the center to reduce its operating costs by thirty percent. The savings were regularly applied toward the purchase of livestock.⁹⁵

Even though Seventh Air Force support to refugee camps and Chieu Hoi centers was given enthusiastically and contributed greatly to their success, medical civic action continued to be the area in which the Seventh Air Force excelled.⁹⁶ Health service throughout South Vietnam was poor, but the shortage of doctors and hospitals in rural areas was especially critical. Several entire provinces were without the

services of a physician or even a medically trained nurse or assistant.⁹⁷ Those provincial hospitals which did exist had a very limited capacity and inadequate staffing. Districts, on the other hand, were equipped with only a dispensary and the capability of administering limited first aid treatment. Villages and hamlets usually possessed only a rural medicine chest with extremely meager supplies.⁹⁸

Vietnam's medical problems were compounded by the wartime environment. Especially during periods of heavy fighting, the large numbers of war-injured created demands for hospitalization which far exceeded provincial capabilities. Other problems arose from the widespread belief in oriental medicine and in evil spirits as the cause of illness, and from primitive or non-existent sanitary methods. Even in Saigon, the water at certain times and places was unfit to drink. But in backward rural areas, it was deadly. Living with disease had consequently become a common factor of life among many sections of the population. Malaria, parasitism, typhoid fever, leprosy, dengue fever, cholera, plague, smallpox, hepatitis, and rabies caused a heavy loss of life and combined with chronic malnutrition to severely limit the people's interest in and ability to expend energy on anything but tasks directly related to maintaining a bare subsistence level. During the Tet offensive, the deficiencies in the government's public health system became even more glaringly apparent when the medical needs of the civilian population skyrocketed.⁹⁹

A major goal of the accelerated pacification program was to upgrade rural health services, making basic medical care available to more South Vietnamese citizens and improving sanitary conditions throughout the country to reduce the incidence of contagious diseases. Seventh Air Force medical activities were designed to support these goals and to supplement the medical program conducted by CORDS and the U.S. Agency for International Development. Much of the help was provided by mobile medical civic action teams which traveled between villages administering medical and dental treatments, giving immunizations, and distributing soap, toothpaste, and toothbrushes. During visits, team members often provided training in first aid, hygiene, sanitation, and child care. Whenever possible, these volunteers also developed medical and immunization records to insure continuity of treatment. The American medics were usually accompanied by South Vietnamese nationals who received on-the-job training by helping distribute medicine and treat patients.¹⁰⁰

The Air Force's medical civic action program was well-planned and executed. Teams operating from Bien Hoa Air Base, for example, scheduled 550 hours of aid a month to surrounding hamlets, orphanages, and leprosariums. Trips were conducted weekly to pre-selected sites which were visited on a rotated basis, assuring follow-up care. "We are usually in the hamlet by 1 P.M., depending on whether we drive or go in by helicopter," reported Captain James F. Crotty, a nurse at the Bien Hoa dispensary and coordinator of his bases medical civic action program.

For three hours we do nothing except treat the villagers. I will see between 60 and 100 patients and the dentist extracts 30 to 50 teeth. We then make house calls for patients who are too ill to travel. After that, we always take a tour of the hamlet. You usually meet new people and learn something different every trip. ...our goal is to improve the health standards and medical situation in the hamlets so one day we can leave and rest assured the villagers can carry on themselves.... I feel that a couple of our sites could carry on if we left today.¹⁰¹

A similar mobile medical aid program at Phan Rang Air Base did not work out as well. According to Major James E. Marquardt, director of medical services at the base, the teams of doctors felt like they were back in "the old days of medicine men...dispensing medicine out of the back of a truck.... We couldn't be consistent enough with this approach, so we pulled back and supported Vietnamese medical facilities." Working through district dispensaries, the team was able to improve on the type of care given by the dispensaries. But more importantly, it was able to upgrade the prestige of local health workers by requiring these Vietnamese medical personnel to do most of the routine work themselves.¹⁰²

During November 1968, the medical civic action personnel at Phu Cat Air Base pioneered a very successful method of providing medical and dental care which was later adopted by other Seventh Air Force bases. It was known as the "fixed facility," or "single point contact" system. As the name implies, a permanent dispensary was built just off base. Rather than have the medical team travel from place to place to see patients, the people themselves would come as far as fifty miles for treatment. The advantages gained by operating from this central location were numerous. Less time spent in travel meant more time to see patients—some 10,000 a month by 1970.¹⁰³ Treatments improved because more accurate and detailed records could be maintained. There was less confusion because only the sick came; the curious stayed away. Probably the biggest advantage realized from this method, however, was that it gave Americans a better chance to teach Vietnamese the principles of modern medicine and thus to project the image of the Vietnamese government.¹⁰⁴ By the end of January 1969, the increased emphasis on health care had begun to show up in Seventh Air Force civic action statistics. The number of medical treatments Air Force personnel gave rose tremendously, from 1,066 in 1967 to 125,518 in 1968, dental treatments increased from 1,880 to 39,112, and the number of immunizations rose to 63,080 from 1,888 given the year before.¹⁰⁵ During 1969, as the South Vietnamese continued to emphasize the importance of pacification, results were even more spectacular.¹⁰⁶ The report from Phu Cat Air Base attested to the overall effectiveness of the program:

The Medical Civic Action Program is in itself proving to be a potent psychological warfare weapon. Subsector advisors have informed us that according to their estimates, in some of the hamlets in which we have worked, at least fifty percent of the population are either Viet Cong, Viet Cong sympathizers or families of Viet Cong. They have further noted that following a MEDCAP (Medical Civic Action Program) visit there has often been an increase in returnees to the hamlet, an increase in ease with which intelligence can be obtained and an increase in the effectiveness of the Popular Forces work in that particular area. Although full credit for this progress cannot be attributed to MEDCAP activities, it is strongly felt that overt psychological warfare activities carried on at the same time with MEDCAP would be otherwise self-defeating. A program which is operated on a strictly humanitarian basis is much more effective in penetrating the obvious barriers.¹⁰⁷

Beginning in 1970, however, U.S. participation in the program began to decline as the policy of Vietnamization started to take effect and more emphasis was placed on

motivating and training the Vietnamese to run their own medical and dental programs.¹⁰⁸

In addition to treating South Vietnamese civilians, a significant part of the USAF's medical program in support of revolutionary development was devoted to providing building materials and guidance for the improvement of hospitals and dispensaries and the construction of wells, public latrines, and medical aid stations. One major goal of the government's public health program, for example, was establishing a maternity dispensary and drug station operated by a rural midwife and a laborer in each of the country's hamlets. The government's council on revolutionary development allotted each hamlet 250,000 piasters to cover construction costs, but many times this amount proved inadequate and the hamlet would have to ask for outside assistance.¹⁰⁹

Such was the situation at Dong Tam 6, a hamlet situated close to Tan Son Nhut Air Base. The money allotted to the hamlet had been enough to erect the structure, but it fell short of the amount needed to construct a modern water system. Consequently, water at the dispensary had to be lifted by hand and carried to storage tanks adjacent to the building. This inconvenience severely cut back on the quality of care the clinic could offer. At the request of the district advisor, USAF personnel from the base civic action office surveyed the situation and agreed to undertake completion of the entire project. After procuring a deep well water pump, pipe, and a water trough, the civic action office arranged to have base engineers give local residents technical assistance in digging the well and installing the equipment. As a result of these actions, the maternity dispensary was assured of ample water year round, and the project brought together CORDS, USAF, and Vietnamese government personnel in a coordinated effort to improve the life of the rural population. The people were grateful. And because the associated publicity stressed the involvement of Vietnamese officials, the government received most of the credit.¹¹⁰

A related situation with similar results involved the civic action people at Cam Ranh Bay during the summer of 1968. An aid station, designed to have an in-house living accommodation for a health worker, and constructed by Vietnamese revolutionary development workers at Tan Thanh, was nearing completion when a high wind storm destroyed it. The structure had been constructed mostly of plywood—not always the best building material. The civic action office on base reacted quickly to the situation, providing heavier lumber for a second attempt. Within a month, the new structure was ready for use. The hamlet chief formally opened the station, praising the tenacity of the government's pacification workers.¹¹¹

Before the end of Air Force involvement in the Vietnamese health program, civic action personnel could report an impressive list of helpful support activities. During one typical three-month period in 1969, for instance, the Seventh Air Force program furnished all the material necessary to construct a dispensary, a drug storage vault, and two public latrines. It provided building materials to renovate five dispensaries, one mental hospital, one maternity clinic, and two provincial hospitals. In addition, USAF civic volunteers helped to upgrade the country's water supply by digging and capping sixteen wells, installing water systems in two schools and one provincial hospital, and erecting a cistern at a large orphanage. During this same time period, numerous bases also furnished equipment for cleanup campaigns in contiguous areas to motivate residents to keep their villages clean and to reduce the rat population. And at almost all bases, the USAF veterinarian conducted clinical programs to vaccinate dogs in a campaign to reduce the incidence of rabies.¹¹²

Another area of concentrated Air Force effort which served as an integral part of revolutionary development was aiding the economic development of the South Vietnamese countryside. As with all countries at war, South Vietnam's economy was severely disrupted. Beginning in the early 1960s, the wealth brought into the country by Americans began to erode normal social and economic patterns. Before long, an extremely rich agricultural country found itself importing food, and people with money to invest held back because of wartime fears.¹¹³

With the expansion of the war effort in 1965 and the extensive U.S. buildup, inflationary pressures became relentless. Over the three-year period between 1965 and 1967 the total increase was about 200 percent.¹¹⁴ While the flow of real goods and services increased with the new American money which was poured into the economy, actual economic gain was shared by only a tiny minority of the people. Prices rose sharply and productivity plummeted. The situation was particularly dismal in farming areas. The Vietnamese rural population had to bear the brunt of the war. Thousands of farmers were forced to flee their ancestral lands to escape Viet Cong terror and fighting. Those who did remain often saw their crops seized by the communists for food or for tax levies ... During the normal course of the war, thousands of acres of crops were also destroyed, and those crops which were successfully harvested often could not be sold because of the disruption of commerce along farm-to-market roads.¹¹⁵ The Tet offensive delivered another terrible blow to the country's rural economy.¹¹⁶

Before the South Vietnamese government could ever hope to win over the rural population, it would have to control spiraling prices, bring effective services into the villages and small towns, and restore economic life to the countryside. This would require much material aid and technical advice from the United States. The American military civic action program was designed to offer just such assistance.

The Air Force's role in this process of economic reconstruction encompassed numerous activities. Many projects were directed toward developing cottage industries, supporting vocational training suitable to local areas, stimulating inter-hamlet trade by road improvement to make hamlets more accessible, and improving local market places.¹¹⁷ A public sewing center, for example, was built in Nha Trang; and at Pleiku and Cam Ranh Bay, airmen gave technical advice for improved garden production to augment the diets of school children and Vietnamese Air Force dependents.¹¹⁸ Even USAF veterinarians had a role in helping the country develop economically. Their work to control rabies and other zoonotic diseases had a considerable impact. Some of the programs they worked on served to increase marketable food items. They helped to introduce egg candling and grading procedures, for example, which improved local egg marketing. And at some bases, the veterinarians assistance in water buffalo breeding programs and used artificial insemination to improve hog and cattle herds.¹¹⁹

One project initiated at Da Nang Air Base proved to be one of the most productive Air Force contributions to the revolutionary development program in that area. The inhabitants of Con Dau, a hamlet situated near the air base, had previously subsisted only on a very marginal rice-growing economy. In July 1968, the base civic action office conceived of a plan to have the Saigon government provide a stock of 2,000 Tilapia fish fingerlings to the community at no cost to the base or the hamlet residents. The fish, essentially a scavenger, lived and spawned in the rice paddies while eating the grasses and algae which tended to reduce the growth of the rice stalks. Thus, the fish was actually beneficial to the rice crop. Moreover, it was fast

breeding and good tasting. It grew to full size in three months, exactly duplicating the rice planting cycle. When the paddies were ready for draining, the fish had already reached maturity and could return to the central pond through the irrigation ditches to spawn more fish. Those that were trapped in the rice paddies could be easily caught by hand and used as additional food for the farmers or could be sold in the district market. The results were enormously successful. Once the pond was stocked, it cost nothing to maintain, and since the government had shouldered the initial expense, it received credit for the project's success.¹²⁰

One other interesting and very successful civic project which the men at Da Nang participated in was the "miracle rice" program. The new strain of rice (IR-8) had been developed in the early 1960s at the International Rice Research Institute, which was situated in the Philippines and supported largely by the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations. Experiments in one South Vietnamese district indicated that it could produce a harvest of 16,000 pounds of rice per hectare (2.47 acres)—more than three times that which could be gathered from native rice strains. And it could be grown in only two-thirds of the time it took other varieties to mature, making two harvests per year possible. But the new plant was expensive to grow, requiring extensive use of fertilizer and pesticides, and extra labor. In addition, it looked and tasted different from the native varieties and consequently encountered considerable resistance among conservative Vietnamese farmers. President Thieu, nonetheless, took a personal interest in the new hybrid, seeing it as having the potential for revolutionizing Vietnamese agriculture, giving a big boost to the food supply, and making the country self-sufficient once again in rice production. Sponsored by the government and backed by the South Vietnamese Ministry of Agriculture and the Agency for International Development, the miracle rice program thus became one of the most ambitious agricultural projects ever undertaken in Asia.¹²¹

The Air Force's role in the program was one of helping the government increase the acreage of IR-8 rice under cultivation. To help publicize the new program, the civic action office at Da Nang Air Base planted several pilot plots in a demonstration field in Con Dan Hamlet. The rice seed was purchased jointly by the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing and Da Nang Air Base. The base loaned four water pumps to the village to aid in irrigating the plots. The CORDS agricultural advisor in the area distributed literature on IR-8 cultivation to the farmers involved and to the village administrators. He also held meetings to introduce and brief surrounding area residents on the miracle rice program and on how they could participate in it. On one occasion, Vietnamese pilots transported farmers and administrators from outlying areas to one of the meetings by helicopter. A government agricultural representative was on hand throughout the test period to monitor the growth of the plants and to keep U.S. participants apprised of the program's progress as well as any problems encountered. As a result of the exemplary cooperation between the various organizations involved, this promotional project produced excellent results, not only convincing more farmers to plant the new rice strain but also publicizing the efforts of the Saigon government to raise the living standards of its citizenry.¹²² Another Da Nang project which brought South Vietnamese and Americans together in a massive cooperative effort was the restoration of communications in the northern part of Hoa Da Village. The road connecting the hamlets of Con Dau and Trung Luong with other parts of the village had been washed out in record-breaking floods in October 1968, leaving two huge gaps. One gap eventually reached over 126 feet. After the Da Nang

civic action officer met several times with district officials, the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, and the area civic action coordinator, a plan was devised for a joint USAF-Marine-Vietnamese project. The 366th Tactical Fighter Wing provided the cement and the transportation; and volunteers from the security police squadron served as perimeter security guards jointly with Marine security personnel. The marine Wing Support Group 17 loaned its front loaders and heavy graders and an engineer to plan and coordinate the project. The village council arranged to have the village chief personally supervise the more than 100 villagers who volunteered for most of the manual labor. After the people had constructed a large seawall to hold back the river, the heavy equipment operators filled in the washed out road. Communication was thus restored to all sectors of Hoa Da, but more importantly, the project served as an outstanding example of how a community development spirit could be generated when the people of a village worked together toward a common goal.¹²³

Not all air bases were as fortunate as Da Nang in organizing economic projects to help the government develop and pacify the territory adjacent to its boundaries. Phan Rang found itself in such a situation. The base was surrounded by hundreds of acres of public lands.

Provincial officials proposed that as a developmental project, large sections of this land be cleared, leveled, and cultivated to help raise the economic status of the area's residents above the marginal level. But the project would require an enormous amount of heavy equipment for a relatively long period of time, and the provincial public works department did not have the equipment required. The air base was not in a much better position. Almost all of its heavy equipment was totally committed to other higher priority projects. Heavy equipment would also have been useful in constructing better access roads into the area. Much of the territory surrounding the base was hostile because the government could not move into the area quickly enough.¹²⁴

In early 1969, enough equipment was finally secured to clear forty hectares of land for about eighty Montagnard families resettled in Ba Rau Hamlet. Just after the land had been cleared, however, another problem arose when the newcomers hesitated to plant crops for fear they would be destroyed by wandering animals. This time the civic action office was able to respond more rapidly. The decision was made to construct a fence around the farmland. Again, the project evoked excellent cooperation. The base furnished forty rolls of barbed wire, the Vietnamese government supplied staples and poles, and the Montagnards provided the labor. Approximately 450 people benefited from the effort.¹²⁵

Despite the trouble the base encountered scheduling heavy equipment for civic development tasks, the Phan Rang civic action program went on to become one of the two best (the other being Nha Trang) in Vietnam. Prior to this, the program had had hardly any impact on the surrounding area. Projects had been undertaken haphazardly, coordination with the local CORDS team was weak, and the base civic action council was inactive. When the interest and support of the base commander was stimulated by Seventh Air Force demands to provide active support to the government's pacification efforts, however, emphasis began to be placed on formulating an effective, high impact program. The civic action council was reactivated and a wide variety of projects were planned and implemented.¹²⁶

Since educational programs constituted another giant prong in the drive to strengthen the Vietnamese nation, much of the assistance the Phan Rang civic action

office provided centered on increasing the effectiveness of the local educational system and supporting various youth organizations. The base's sponsorship of 236 scholarships in eight local high schools, for example, became a keynote project. Other high impact youth projects included a competitive sports and a performing arts program.¹²⁷

Projects involving youth clubs, particularly those organized by Vietnamese revolutionary development cadre or Vietnamese government agencies, also produced rewarding results and demonstrated the importance of this phase of community development. An added bonus was that the clubs themselves often became involved in economic projects. Youth clubs in the hamlets of Ninh Quy, My An, and An Hoa, for instance, undertook duck and swine raising projects and two of them started vegetable gardens which significantly improved the diet of the hamlet residents. Numerous "Project Father" activities by base units in the local community proved of exceptional value as well in terms of advancing the local way of life, improving relationships between American military personnel and Vietnamese citizens, and gaining intelligence information.¹²⁸

Late in 1969, in order to teach the concepts of leadership and organization, as well as more modern techniques of agriculture and animal husbandry, officials from the Vietnamese government, the local CORDS office, and the Phan Rang civic action office constructed three revolutionary development youth centers in the Du Khanh, Binh Quy, and Thuan Hoa Hamlets. The Vietnamese government supplied all the cement and roofing for the seven-meter, hexagon-shaped center houses; CORDS provided six mahogany beams for each structure and a rural technician who served as the construction advisor; and the base civic action office provided the lumber for the center houses, wire mesh for the poultry pens, and barbed wire and poles for a fence around each of the compounds. The center houses were prefabricated by revolutionary development cadres at their Phan Rang headquarters and transported to the hamlets where they were erected on concrete foundations. Besides the center house, each of the compounds had a volleyball and badminton court, a junior soccer field, a pig sty, a poultry pen with a shed, and an irrigated twenty-by-thirty meter garden plot. After the centers had been completed, one Air Force sergeant who had participated in the project called it a "truly positive investment in the future of Vietnam."¹²⁹ In addition to efforts to resettle and accommodate refugees and returnees, to improve South Vietnam's public health program, to make the country more economically viable, and to upgrade its educational capabilities, the Seventh Air Force civic action program played a large role as well in trying to build up a responsible and loyal local administrative structure. The village for centuries had been the basic social and political unit in Vietnamese society. When village and hamlet administrations worked well, they served to extend the prestige, laws, and political influence of South Vietnam's central government. Communist leaders knew this, but they also knew that without a sound local governmental structure, Saigon would never win the battle for the peasants' allegiance. Public administration had, therefore, been a special target of the Viet Cong since the struggle for control of the country began, and literally thousands of local government officials had been systematically murdered, maimed, or kidnapped. The result was a steady deterioration of Saigon's influence and a correspondingly firmer grip by the Viet Cong over those areas where the administrators presided. The toll of civil servants was especially high in 1964 and 1965. By 1967, the Viet Cong had eliminated more than 33,000 of them by one means

or another, making the link between the rural peasant and Saigon very weak indeed.¹³⁰ Even as early as 1965, it was estimated that no more than five percent of the rural population knew who the Prime Minister was. As an example, General Westmoreland related an experience he had during a visit to one such rural province. While separated from his aide for a few minutes, the aide tried to explain to one inquisitive peasant who Westmoreland was. The peasant exclaimed, "My God, he must be as high as the Province Chief."¹³¹

one major objective of the revolutionary development program was to forge a responsible and creative relationship between central, provincial, and village government and to restore some authority and autonomy to the vital and traditional village-hamlet administrative level. The government of Vietnam outlined this new direction in a revised pacification and development plan which took effect on February 1, 1969.¹³² The new campaign was a natural extension of the highly successful accelerated pacification program. Its aim was to consolidate the gains made during the previous three months. Its major emphasis was on holding local elections throughout the country to reinstate the village chief in his rightful position as administrative and political leader of his people, and thereby to kindle a "community spirit" among South Vietnamese citizens. Because many of these newly elected officials would be without administrative experience, considerable stress was also placed on erecting national and provincial training centers to teach budgetary and taxation principles as well as other skills needed to run a government.¹³³

The Seventh Air Force played a varied role in helping to improve the effectiveness of local South Vietnamese government. As early as 1967, Air Force 0-2s from the newly formed 9th Air Commando Squadron dropped several million leaflets to give voting instructions to the population and encourage them to participate in the national and provincial elections in September.¹³⁴ The following year, airmen from many different units participated in a program designed to generate a feeling of national unity throughout the country. A major portion of the effort consisted of distributing "patriotic kits" to schools and school children. Each kit contained a photograph of President Thieu, a map of South Vietnam, and several patriotic songs and poems, among other things. The kits were supplied by CORDS provincial representatives, who also coordinated the program.¹³⁵

Beginning in 1969, Air Force civic activities shifted from supporting projects at the hamlet level to giving more village-level support. Office furniture, for example, was provided in several instances to help improve village offices, and materials were furnished to rebuild several administrative headquarters buildings that had been destroyed by the Viet Cong. Numerous other public facilities were constructed as well. USAF personnel, for example, built dormitories for Montagnards attending the National Police Academy.¹³⁶ And at the request of the Vietnamese Chief of Security for Phu Yen Province, the men at Tuy Hoa Air Base supplied surplus materials to construct a new military security administrative complex and jail facilities. This new facility had been needed and desired by the province for some time, but funds could not be obtained from CORDS or the Vietnamese government. With USAF material support and indigenous labor, the structure was completed, becoming a showpiece for Phu Yen Province. The men at Tuy Hoa also donated nearly \$600 to purchase books and reference materials for a new Public Administration Library in Tuy Hoa City. The library served village and provincial officials interested in improving their administrative skills.¹³⁷ Other bases joined in the effort to improve local government

by concentrating on police protection. Village self-defense forces were transported to and from small arms training sites, uniforms were provided popular forces personnel, and security fences were built around hamlets—all in an attempt to make rural South Vietnam safe enough for local government to take root and the revolutionary development program to succeed.¹³⁸

As the accelerated pacification effort was gathering momentum, the United States began to push its policy of Vietnamization; and in line with that policy, a new approach to aiding the people and enhancing their socioeconomic status through the village government was devised. Passed on to the field through various memoranda and pamphlets from the Prime Minister's office, this new village self-development program called on elected hamlet and village officials to bring their problems to the attention of district and provincial leaders themselves, rather than work through American advisors. By May 1, 1970, over 2,000 villages (slightly better than eighty percent of the total number of villages in the country) were operating under elected administrations.¹³⁹ According to the new village development program, successful elections made these population centers eligible for government funds in the amount of one million Vietnamese piasters. The money was for use exclusively on self-help projects, but village councils were free to decide how the funds were to be applied. Theoretically then, villages were in a position of being able to plan, direct, and fund their own civic projects without even consulting American advisors.¹⁴⁰

For the Seventh Air Force, this new system brought no drastic changes in methods of operation, and the conduct of developmental projects closely paralleled past efforts by USAF units. Base civic action personnel, however, now had added incentive to push the idea of Vietnamese self-help. It was largely because of such insistence on Vietnamese direction of the community development program, for example, that Da Nang's civic action officer could report that the idea had taken root in Hoa Da Village and was "paying off with an unusual blossoming of zeal on the part of local government officials," he continued:

The hamlet chiefs and village chief in particular have never worked harder than they are now in planning and carrying out a whole series of projects with rapid completions and an eagerness, to go on to the next project becoming the order of the day. Even the traditional two hour afternoon siesta seems to have become a casualty of the pace of the program. This difference between the level of responsiveness now and the pace of work at first is remarkable.¹⁴¹

As local Vietnamese officials assumed more responsibility for pacification, both monetary and material aid by U.S., military forces were expected to decline proportionately. This was, in fact, what happened in the case of the Seventh Air Force civic action program. In 1969, the Vietnamese government provided a large budget to the Central Pacification and Development Council to finance developmental projects, but by year's end, the money the Council had spent represented only twenty percent of the total amount spent on civic projects sponsored by USAF. The Seventh Air Force spent \$426,000 in appropriated funds. By 1970, however, the Vietnamese contribution had risen to forty percent, and the Air Force budget was cut to \$295,000. In 1971, the percentage of Vietnamese-supplied material rose another eight percent.¹⁴²

As the Seventh Air Force contribution in terms of funds and supplies decreased,

so too did direct participation by Air Force personnel on specific civic action projects. Beginning in 1969,, "self-help" for the Vietnamese and "low visibility presence" for Americans became the major themes in USAF-supported civic activities. That year the Vietnamese supplied seventy-two percent of the labor on community development projects sponsored by the Seventh Air Force. That figure increased to eighty percent in 1970, and by 1971 the South Vietnamese were doing ninety-six percent of the work themselves. BY achieving this high degree of popular participation on its projects, the Seventh Air Force set a record. No other Free World military force was able to attract such a large percentage of popular support for its civic activities.¹⁴³ This large amount of participation was even more significant when the fact that it was voluntary is taken into consideration. Indeed, in most cases, popular enthusiasm served as the initiating factor for undertaking a project.¹⁴⁴

Partly due to the heavy emphasis by Seventh Air Force field operators and base civic action teams on Vietnamese participation, then, village, hamlet, and provincial officials began to show a greater awareness of their role in community development and to expand their activities within the framework of the village council. By 1971, a good part of that expansion was taking place without any U.S. or Free World assistance.¹⁴⁵ During this same time, project sponsorship by government welfare agencies also began to rise. Such efforts were especially successful in the Nha Trang and Cam Ranh Bay areas as early as 1969. In these instances, U.S. support was limited to acquisition of materials and giving technical advice, but the visible presence before the people remained that of Vietnamese government personnel.¹⁴⁶ Thus by constantly urging Vietnamese officials to organize their people and utilize their talents, many useful and lasting projects resulted. And in the final analysis, this was the key to successful revolutionary development and the ultimate goal of military civic action: helping the people to help themselves.

NOTES

Chapter VII: Redefining Seventh Air Force Civic Action

1. Ltr, Gen Momyer to 3TFW, 12TFW, 35TFW, 14ACW, 366TFW, 37C5G, 377C5G, 632C5G, 633C5G, subj: Seventh Air Force Civic Action Program, Oct 8, 1966.
2. Study, Hq USMACV, Military Analysis of the Counterinsurgency in Vietnam 1963-1964, Jan 26, 1965, p 8 Joseph Kraft, "The Third Kind of War," Washington Post, Feb 21, 1966, p 21; Jack Anderson, "Corruption Is Saigon's Major Foe," Washington Post, Feb 27, 1968.
3. Robert W. Komer, "The Other War in Vietnam—A Progress Report," Department of State Bulletin, Oct 10, 1966, p 557.
4. The Declaration of Honolulu, Feb 8, 1966, in Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson 1966, I, 154-155.
5. "Saigon to Revise Pacification Plan," New York Times, Sep 22, 1966, p 4.
6. Concept Paper, U.S. Mission, Saigon, subj: Revolutionary Development Concept, n.d. [late 1966]; MACV Pamphlet 4-67, Revolutionary Development Plan for a New Vietnam, Feb 67.
7. This program grew out of the Political Action Teams begun in a few provinces in late 1964. Robert W. Komer, "The Other War in Vietnam—A Progress Report," Department of State Bulletin, Oct 10, 1966, pp 558-60; working paper, Foreign Service Institute, Dept of State, An Assessment of Revolutionary Development/Pacification, Jun 5, 1967, p 7; Ward Just, "Vietnam Pacification Moving—But Slowly," Washington Post, Dec 10, 1966, p 1.
8. Statement, Robert W. Komer, White House Press Briefing, Feb 27, 1967, in Department of State Bulletin, Mar 20, 1967, p 470.
9. Statement, Gen Maxwell D. Taylor, White House Press Conference, Jan 30, 1967, in Department of State Bulletin, Feb 20, 1967, p 286; R. W. Apple, Jr., "Pacification Held Half Effective," New York Times, Dec 9, 1966, p 9; R. W. Apple, Jr., "200 Pacification Workers Rebel, Charging Corruption in Vietnam Province," New York Times, Oct 5, 1967, p 10.
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11. Richard Harwood, "Viet Pacification Drags Despite Reorganizations," Washington Post, Aug 3, 1967, p 1.
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13. Robert Komer, "Was There Another Way?" in Thompson and Frizzell, Lessons of Vietnam, p 213.
14. William Westmoreland, "A Report to the Congress by the Commander of U.S. Military Forces in Viet Nam," Department of State Bulletin, May 15, 1967, p 740.
15. Testimony of Robert S. McNamara, in Hearing before the Subcommittee on Appropriations and Military Assistance, House of Representatives, DOD 1968 Appropriations, 90th Cong, 1st sess (Washington, 1967). pt 2, pp 10-11; Creighton W. Abrams,, "Vietnamese Army Starts to Fight," U.S. News & World Report, Dec 4, 1967,

p 27; Gravel Pentagon Papers, II, 483-84.

16. Joint Statement, Manila Summit Conference, Oct 25, 1966, in Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson, 1966, p 1260; Gravel Pentagon Papers, II, 608.

17. Remarks by COMUSMACV, MACV Commanders' Conference, Nov 20, 1966, in hist, USMACV, 1966, p 552; Bernard Gwertzman, "U.S., Combat Role Reversed to Revamp Saigon's Army," Washington Star, Nov 18, 1966, p 1.

18. Gravel Pentagon Papers, II, 608; Richard Critchfield, 1110-Point Viet Plan Mapped to Fight the Political 'War,'" Washington Star, Nov 2, 1966, p 3.

19. Remarks by COMUSMACV, MACV Commanders' Conference, Nov 20, 1966, in hist, USMACV, 1966, p 552.

20. Hist, Dir/Plans, USAF, Jul 1-Dec 31, 1966, Vol 31, pp 165-166. Some of the agencies involved were the U.S. Agency for International Development, the CIA, the U.S. Public Affairs Office, and the American Embassy.

21. Ltr, 7th AF (DPLG) to PACAF (DPLPC), subj: Air Force Civic Action Report (RCS: AF-037), Jan 11, 1967; Charles Mohr, "U.S. Air Photos and Technology Will Map Better Future for Vietnam's Peasants," New York Times, Sep 27, 1966; Eric Pace, "Saigon to Hasten Cropland Reform: Computers and Air Surveys to Be Paid for by U.S.," New York Times, Aug 23, 1966.

22. Msg, COMUSMACV to CG III, MAF/SA I CTZ, et al, 091047Z Dec 66, subj: Integration of Civil Support for Revolutionary Development (RD).

23. MACRDS Fact Sheet, subj: Organization of Office of Civil Operations, Mar 15, 1967; Gravel Pentagon Papers Gravel Pentagon Papers, II, 564-65; statement, Gen Maxwell D. Taylor, White House Press Conference, Jan 30, 1967, in Department of State Bulletin, Feb 20, 1967, pp 286-87.

24. Briefing, Maj Charles M. Cooke, MACV, Revolutionary Development Support Directorate (RDSD), subj: Revolutionary Development, Dec 16, 1966; hist, USMACV, 1967, II, 565-66.

25. The prime objective of the Guam conference was to force the pace of pacification and reconstruction work in South Vietnam.

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29. Command Hist, CINCPAC, 1967, II, 519.

30. The 1967 Combined Campaign Plan, as cited in Gravel Pentagon Papers, II, 484, 496, and in hist, USMACV, 1966, p 550; Peter Braestrup, "Civic Action," Washington Post, May 1, 1968, p 19.

31. Repercussions of this action were felt from the lowest level units working at the district level in Vietnam all the way up to the CINCPAC staff. Within the Southeast Asia Plans and Policy Branch of CINCPAC, for example, a new Civil-Military Relations Section was created to provide "greater responsiveness to new and rapidly

changing requirements in areas involving civil-military relationships inherent in Revolutionary Development, Pacification, and Nation Building in Southeast Asia. Command hist, CINCPAC, 1967, II, 738; USMACV Directive 10-12, Organizations and Functions for Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support, May 67; Gravel Pentagon Papers, II, 486.

32. MACV Directive 10-12, Organizations and Functions for Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support, May 28, 1967; statement, U.S. Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker; Saigon News Conference, May 11, 1967, in Department of State Bulletin, Jan 5, 1967, pp 844-45; David K. Willis, "'Other' Viet War in Spotlight Again," Christian Science Monitor, Mar 20, 1967, p 24.

33. Statement, Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker appointing W. C. Westmoreland as head of the American pacification effort, in MACV Observer, May 24, 1967, p 4; Congressional Record, May 11, 1967, p 56770; Komer, Impact of Pacification, p 3.

34. Robert W. Komer, "Clear, Hold and Rebuild," Army, May 70, p 13.

35. James L. Trainor, "What Business Does the Military Have in Pacification/Nation-Building?" Armed Forces Mt, Aug 67, pp 32-33, 71-72.

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37. Address, Lt Gen L. F. Chapman, Jr., CS, Hq USMC, National War College Wives Club, National War College, Ft. McNair, Washington, D.C., Nov 2, 1966; Just, "Westmoreland Role Expands," p 1; Ward Just, "New Army Role Dismays U.S. Civilians in Vietnam," Washington Post, May 12, 1967, p 1.

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39. Rprt, Congressman John V. Tunney, to Committee on Foreign Relations, House of Representatives, Measuring Hamlet Security in Vietnam, 90th Cong, 2d sess (Washington, 1969); "Pacification in Viet-Nam," Viet-Nam Information Notes (Dept of State publication 8473, Number 14, Jul 69); Dorothy K. Clark and Charles R. Wyman, The Hamlet Evaluation System in the Republic of Vietnam (RAC-TP-308, McLean, Va: Research Analysis Corp, 1968); Col Erwin R. Brigham, "Pacification Measurement," Military Review, May 70, pp 47-54.

40. "Relatively secure areas" were those with a sufficient level of security that the enemy could not operate freely in them and where reasonably normal social and economic activity was possible. The Hamlet Evaluation System was a computerized method of measurement which became operational in January 1967. Following a checklist of eighteen criteria, American officers in the field graded each of South Vietnam's 12,000 rural hamlets for degree of government control—or protection—on a descending scale of A through E. If the hamlet was thoroughly controlled by the Viet Cong, it was graded VC. In compiling its claim that two-thirds of the population lived under government control, CORDS lumped together 3.5 million living in cities and 8 million living in A, B, and C hamlets. Almost 2.5 million persons in Class D and Class E hamlets were said to be "contested," while just under 3 million persons were said to be under Viet Cong control. This interpretation—particularly the claim of government control of all 4 million persons living in Class C hamlets—was open to question and it masked the existence of 2 million homeless refugees. Hist, Dir/Plans, USAF, Jul 1-Dec 31, 1966, Vol 31, pp 166-167; hist, USMACV, 1967, II, 622-627;

"Komer Reports on Pacification," New York Times, Dec 2, 1967, p 5; "Saigon Controls Two-Thirds of the Country, Computer Says," Washington Post, Dec 2, 1967, p 10.

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42. Hist, USMACV, 1967, II, 622-627; USAF RD OPlan, USAF Plan for Revolutionary Development, Jun 1, 1967; Vietnam: The War Inside the War, The Economist, Jan 13, 1968, p 36.

43. Annual Report of the Secretary of the Air Force, Department of Defense Annual Report for Fiscal Year 1967, (Washington, 1969), p 399; briefing, Maj Charles M. Cooke, MACV, Revolutionary Development Support Directorate (RDSD), subj: Revolutionary Development, Dec 16, 1966.

44. Annual Report of the Secretary of the Air Force. Department of Defense Annual Report for Fiscal year 1967, (Washington, 1969), p 79.

45. USAF RD OPlan, USAF Plan for Revolutionary Development, Jun 1, 1967; USAF Military Civic Action, Semiannual Report (DCS/Plans and Operations, USAF, Oct 68), pp 24-25.

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51. Briefing, Maj Charles M. Cooke, MACV, Revolutionary Development Support Directorate (RDSD), subj: Revolutionary Development, Dec 16, 1966; MACV Directive 515-2, Psychological Operations/Military Civic Action, Apr 68.

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57. Policy ltr, Comdr, 7th AF, subj: Civic Action Program, Sep 12, 1968.

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CHAPTER VIII

SUMMARY, ASSESSMENT, AND CONCLUSION

How, with all that military machine still intact, did we ever end up as we have?

—"Colonel Nemo" (1956)¹

Materiel inferiority in front of the enemy is not serious. What is more important is the mobilization of the people, The people must be a great ocean in which the enemy will drown itself.

—Mao Tse-tung²

By all standards, the Vietnamese conflict was a paradoxical struggle of infinite complexity. Any attempt to understand it is, therefore, likely to fall short of the desired results. But in more than one respect it was an immensely important war for the United States. While it was being fought, its outcome was considered both politically and militarily significant. And now, years after the fighting has ended, the lessons which the war has to teach can still be of considerable worth in helping the United States determine a better course of action for use in similar conflicts in which it may find itself involved in the future. Efforts to analyze and explain the various successes and failures of the struggle over South Vietnam must, consequently, continue.

The Vietnamese War was unique and paradoxical in a number of different senses. For one thing, it was a new kind of conflict. It was both a civil war, dividing families, and a war fostered outside South Vietnam and fought in large part by forces not native to the country. It was a war in which one side fought to defend a democratic government, both the existence and value of which were open to question, while the other side fought a war of "national liberation" that would liberate no one. It was both a conventional war with clearly defined targets and a frontal battlefield, and an unconventional, guerrilla war with no front, necessitating countless, never-before-used actions against an enemy who used every military and political means at his disposal to escape defeat, to disrupt normal social, political, and economic patterns in the South, and to discredit the Saigon government. And finally, it was a war in which one side had overwhelming air power, but the other could choose when and where to let loose guerrilla attacks.

Hindsight makes it almost impossible to believe that even an administratively weak and economically depressed country, such as South Vietnam was in the 1960s and 1970s, could lose out in a struggle with another third world country when it was backed by the technological wealth and tremendous war-making potential of the United States. And tipping the scales still further in favor of South Vietnam were the millions of dollars and thousands of manhours the United States spent there to build up the nation socially, economically, and politically. A look at the facts and figures generated by the war itself makes its outcome even more paradoxical. After the shock

of the communists' 1968 Tet offensive had worn off, the allies gained ground steadily in both the military war and the war for the political support of the South Vietnamese masses. As the tide turned, a major change of mood pervaded the American establishment in Vietnam, and many officials began to make optimistic statements that victory was only a short time off.³ Much was made of newly-opened roads and waterways, of improved rural economic conditions, of the large numbers of hard core Viet Cong cadres that were neutralized, of the even larger numbers of refugees returned to the villages, and of the willingness of ever larger numbers of Vietnamese to participate in local elections and to enlist in their village and hamlet militia.⁴ All these signs were taken as evidence of a slow, but steady growth of governmental influence throughout the country.⁵

The new optimism extended into the 1970s. In January 1971, Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker noted that "the record of the past two years leads me to believe that no matter how severe the test, we shall not be found wanting."⁶ And John P. Vann, the civilian who headed the American pacification effort in the troubled Mekong delta region, was of the opinion that the peasants essentially saw the war as over by 1971. They were not publicly coming in to say that they renounced the Viet Cong and wished to join the government side. But in equally meaningful ways they were refusing the communist call to dig up roads, destroy bridges, or act as porters to carry supplies. Vann admitted that evidence of this switch in political support was something which was not subject to statistical reporting. Nevertheless, he was convinced that the South Vietnamese people were silently making the decision, "in ever-increasing numbers...that the good life they have been fighting for on the enemy's side is available now, if, instead of following the war, they follow the plow."⁷

Along these same lines, some analysts interpreted the renewed vigor of the Viet Cong in 1972 as a sort of last gasp which would have proved to be just that had the United States been willing and the South Vietnamese able to keep up the military pressure on communist resources. One observer expressing such a sentiment was the British expert on counterinsurgency warfare, Sir Robert Thompson. "The result of successful Vietnamization and pacification," Thompson noted, "was that by early 1971 the North decided that the only thing left was to invade. Lieutenant Colonel Irving LeBlanc, who as a major headed up the Seventh Air Force civic action effort in South Vietnam before and during the 1972 Easter offensive and who was thus in a position to view the program from a wide perspective, expressed the same opinion as Thompson. "Pacification was a success," he said. "That's the reason the North Vietnamese had to invade. They could not have won in any other way."⁹

Aside from personal observations of success in the pacification effort, there were other, more quantitative measures of political influence indicating that Saigon had, indeed, made tremendous progress in re-asserting political control over the country's rural parts. By 1970 security indices showed that a situation had developed to where, providing security no longer required primary emphasis.¹⁰ And the following year, the Saigon government dropped the outmoded term "pacification" completely from its planning documents. Instead of the old Pacification and Development Campaign, a new 1971 Community Defense and Local Development Plan was published. It put forth three broad objectives: self-defense, self-government, and self-development.¹¹ At the same time that regional and popular forces took on an increasingly more important role and villages took over responsibility for their own affairs, terrorist incidents gradually declined and Chieu Hoi rates increased.¹²

U.S. government statistics on pacification revealed equally impressive gains. At the beginning of 1973, for example, figures compiled under the Hamlet Evaluation System showed that security had been extended to eighty percent of the population in South Vietnam.¹³ This meant that a total of 8.2 million people had been made secure during the five years between December 1967 and December 1972. Many of these gains occurred during 1969 when the impact of the accelerated pacification campaign began to be felt. Some 4.3 million were added to the secure category during that year alone. At the same time, areas still contested by both sides fell to an all-time low.

The figure of 80 percent was considered a conservative figure by some since it was based only on those hamlets falling within the top two ratings on the Hamlet Evaluation System's scale. The following table depicts the same general trend, but instead of listing only "A" and "B" hamlets as secure, it includes those in the "C" category as well—while accounts for the higher figures.

South Vietnamese Influence or Control

	<u>1964</u>	<u>1967</u>	<u>1972</u>
"Secure" population (in millions)	6.8	11.5	18.0
Percent of total	42	67	93
Total population (in millions)	16.1	17.2	19.3

It is futile to debate which set of figures is more accurate, especially when the movement of refugees from insecure rural areas to relatively secure urban areas has to be taken into consideration. The trend, however, seemed unmistakably clear (even granting the weaknesses endemic to the Hamlet Evaluation System): By the end of 1972, the government had made significant progress in extending its influence—militarily and politically—into rural localities formally controlled by the Viet Cong.

Along with the change in the nature of the war, the acceleration of community development, and the extension of security to previously insecure areas, increased interest in the political process in the countryside and at the national level served to verify the accuracy of these statistics. The involvement of the South Vietnamese people in political activities increased significantly during 1970. Through a series of elections that year, various political groups had an opportunity to run candidates who supported their views. Village and hamlet elections held in the spring produced a high degree of voter participation. on the whole, campaigns centered around real issues such as the incumbent's performance in the village self-development program or his responsible or irresponsible use of funds. The program of giving additional power, responsibility, and resources to village governments also stimulated interest in these local elections and generally brought about an improvement in the cruelty of elected

officials. For many of these same reasons, a large percentage of registered voters turned out for provincial and national elections as well. This acceleration of the political process put the nation's constitutional machinery to the test and marked the beginning of the country's political maturity—a prime objective of the nation-building effort.¹⁴

Above all, however, there was considerable evidence to suggest that the principle of self-help—probably the most important prerequisite for success in Vietnam and the ultimate objective of Vietnamization—had taken firm root in the country. During the spring invasion of 1972, for instance, Gen. Lucius S. Clay, Jr., Commander in Chief, Pacific Air Forces, characterized the Vietnamese Air Force's performance as "tremendous—the brightest spot of the whole Vietnamization program," and Major General James F. Hollingsworth, Commander, Third Regional Assistance Command, witnessed an equally superb performance on the part of Vietnamese ground troops in the battle for An Loc.¹⁵ Although many other observers did not give the Vietnamese military (especially the Army) such high marks, the South Vietnamese must be credited with having helped successfully, and with much determination, to turn back the well-equipped flood of Northern invaders at a time when American participation was ebbing under Nixon's program of phased withdrawal.¹⁶

The same determination to accept the policy of self help appeared even more clearly in the way military civic action and the rest of the revolutionary development program was carried out. As noted earlier, the Vietnamese military began increasingly to accept civic responsibilities after 1968. And because of the way it was structured, the revolutionary development program had been directed and manned almost completely by the Vietnamese from the outset of the "new model" pacification effort.¹⁷

With all these positive indications of military and political progress, the question must be asked, why then did the allied effort fail and the communists succeed in taking over the country so quickly and easily after the final withdrawal of American troops? Certainly the allies had fought with vigor. It is true that they were required to operate at times under debilitating restrictions; yet in all the major engagements of the war, they never lost a single battle. Perhaps the blame for the final collapse of South Vietnam should thus be placed elsewhere. Throughout the conflict it had been common for commanding generals and top civilians to say on occasion that they were convinced the real struggle in Vietnam was for the people—that the outcome would not be determined on the battlefield by military measures alone.¹⁸ And with the inauguration of the "new model" pacification program in mid-1967, this "other war" did begin to receive considerable emphasis. Is there historical evidence, then, that pacification were not the key to success either? Or is there more evidence to suggest that while the basic idea of pacification was valid, there was something inherently wrong with the way pacification was carried out—that despite rhetoric to the contrary, the commitment to follow through with certain aspects of the program was somehow lacking?

This study has been limited to the nonmilitary aspects of pacification, particularly to the Seventh Air Force's civic action program. Broad-based, authoritative answers to these questions cannot therefore, be given. Military civic action, however, was considered the primary Air Force contribution to the South Vietnamese pacification and revolutionary development campaign.¹⁹ An assessment of the successes and shortcomings of this Seventh Air Force program can perhaps shed some light on the more fundamental questions about the United States' role in this most controversial

war, Before such an assessment is undertaken, however, one word of caution should be given: care must be exercised in evaluating the program. It must be remembered that although military civic action was the Air Force's major contribution to pacification, the program still represented only a very small part of a very large undertaking—the small tail of the very large military dog mentioned earlier. Moreover, there is no really accurate way of gauging the impact of any one element among the many that made up the entire pacification drive.

Further complicating any assessment is the fact that most civic action reports and evaluations generated by periodic staff visits were subjective in nature and indicators of progress very abstract. While facts and figures exist to document a measurable improvement in the way the program was carried out, there were no absolute standards against which the success of civic activities could be measured. How could the depth of political loyalty or good will be measured, for example? Or how could it be claimed with assurance that building a schoolhouse in village "X" was the catalyst responsible for changing the political feelings of the village residents? Or again, how could it be proved that the opening of a medical dispensary was related in any way to the increase of usable intelligence information collected from the area's inhabitants? There were no simple answers to these questions. There were no body counts or other measurable statistics like the number of sorties flown. There were usually only "encouraging signs."²⁰ Lt. Gen. Lewis W. Walt, Commander of the Third Marine Amphibious Force and an ardent supporter of civic action, recalled having only an "unscientific...gut feeling" that the huge effort his forces were putting into civic action was paying off, "The number of wells dug, the number of patients treated could be tabulated," Walt noted, "but the meaning of them to the Vietnamese people,, the results of these works in the myriad ways they could be evidenced were immeasurable."²¹ Likewise, Lt. Col. Irving LeBlanc, who served as Seventh Air Force civic action division chief in 1971 and 1972, reported the same "gut feeling" about the success and value of civic activities but admitted that an absolute determination of their contribution would be impossible to ascertain.²² Given the intensity of the debate over how the United States should have dealt with the Vietnam War, however, as well as the controversy which accompanied the practice of civic action, an attempt at evaluation must be made.

The assessment of any undertaking must start with objectives. What did the advocates and serious practitioners of civic action expect to accomplish in Vietnam? The overall goal of the Seventh Air Force program was to help build a cohesive, politically stable, and militarily secure Vietnamese nation capable of withstanding the military and political challenge presented by subversive elements like the Viet Cong. Such a society would be headed by a politically conscious government intent on maintaining power by the democratic principle of majority rule. This implied the need not only for free and fair elections, but also for an informed populace and political candidates who had the interests of that populace uppermost in their minds.

Civic action personnel realized that their objective of creating a strong, cohesive, and democratic South Vietnamese society could not be accomplished through nonmilitary activities alone. But when these activities were accompanied by sufficient military and police-type operations to provide sustained security at the critical village and hamlet level, civic action was believed to be an indispensable element in efforts to reach this goal.²³ Architects of the Seventh Air Force civic action program outlined four ways in which their program was designed to help build a nation in South

Vietnam, First, it could help develop Vietnamese capabilities to manage the activities of the populace in community development.

This "development of Vietnamese capabilities" was seen as the essential aspect of military civic action. It concerned the development of those social and psychological characteristics (organization, planning, leadership, values, attitudes, motivation, knowledge, and skills) that had been necessary for progressive development in traditional, democratic societies. Second, civic action was seen as a way of improving the economic and social welfare of the average person. The tactical value of material advancement and a more cohesive social order appeared as essential factors needed for political stability. And projects which used Vietnamese resources for socioeconomic development were viewed as particularly valuable. Third, the Air Force expected civic activities to promote closer and better relations between the people and their government. This could best be done by insuring the Vietnamese government's maximum participation in and control of all civic action projects. And fourth, community development was seen as a practical, cost effective way of improving the security of each air base. When community activities were sponsored by the U.S. military, better U.S. relations with local villagers could be expected. A friendly off-base population would be less likely to harbor Viet Cong, North Vietnamese infiltrators, or communist sympathizers and would also be a valuable source of intelligence information. Though not an objective which the Seventh Air Force worked for explicitly, an increased flow of information from the people was considered a natural by-product of a successful civic action program.

While most Air Force personnel who served as civic action officers in Vietnam believed civic action to be a prime determinant of success in the Southeast Asian conflict, there were even more military people who staunchly criticized the program, categorizing it as almost completely useless—a waste of time and money—and really none of the military's business. Many of the latter detractors felt that military forces were intended for combat and related preparations only, and that civic and developmental activities should be reserved for the period of military occupation following a general war. Critics also believed that involvement in domestic or political problems interfered with the military's ability to prepare for and fight wars by fragmenting time, equipment, and funds.²⁴

Giving expression to these feelings, an article in one leading military journalist asked, "What Business Does the Military Have in Pacification/Nation-Building?"²⁵ I was a civic action volunteer and the program didn't work," was also a criticism frequently leveled against the program. Indeed, the once enthusiastic British phrase about "winning the hearts and minds" of the peasantry was reduced by some officials quite early in the war to the slightly cynical acronym: WHAM.²⁶

Which assessment was accurate? Was civic action "indispensable," or was it "useless"? As with most questions about a controversial subjects the answers are never as clearly cut as the two options at each end of the spectrum would make them appear. Ambassador Komer, however, once posed a rhetorical question about his much maligned pacification program:

is it possible that no effect on rural attitudes could result from pacification's recognized achievements in protecting and helping the people of the countryside, reducing guerrilla attacks and terror, restoring village self government and fostering development through

self-help, opening roads and waterways, improving agricultural output, providing better medical care and hamlet schooling?²⁷

The answer seems obvious. "Many other factors must be taken into account," Komer concluded, "but all the above must also be weighed in the balance."²⁸

With the "useless" option essentially ruled out, the problem, thus, becomes the more difficult one of determining the degree of success actually achieved and whether this success represented a full achievement. At least part of the solution to this problem can be found by determining how effectively the announced objectives were carried out and what benefits resulted. The other part can be derived from a study of the limitations on the practice of civic action and by analyzing those factors which prevented the program from achieving its full potential.

A recurring phrase in Seventh Air Force reports after 1968 was that civic action was consistently "meeting its established goals."²⁹ It will be recalled that after the Tet offensive and the promulgation of the accelerated pacification plan, the Air Force made a conscious effort to formalize its civic action program. This led to better coordination with other U.S. and Vietnamese officials, eliminated much duplication and overlap, and allowed more effective utilization of supplies. Controls were also set up to insure that each developmental project complemented the South Vietnamese government's own pacification plans and that Air Force civic action officers and volunteers assumed a low profile in relation to the South Vietnamese when civic projects were undertaken. There were times when these rules were not followed, but the statistics compiled by each base officer showed a significant overall improvement in the way the program was carried out after 1968.³⁰

For one thing, South Vietnamese interest in and response to the program rose dramatically after Americans began delegating more responsibilities. Early in 1969, the headquarters Seventh Air Force civic action office reported to Pacific Air Forces: "The number of projects being concluded and taken over by the people is rewarding."³¹ Moreover, statistics showed that many institutions which had been dependent on continual aid had become self-sufficient. This represented a great stride forward. Equally impressive were reports from base civic action officers throughout South Vietnam detailing the way in which community officials were taking the initiative in planning and managing projects, while local residents were contributing time, labor, and occasionally funds.³² The *Civic Action Newsletter* published in March 1969, summarized the general feeling of optimism about the program's accomplishment: "In the hamlets where civic action projects were initiated, the people developed a feeling that the Vietnamese Government is there to stay."³³ The pride accompanying self-accomplishment in turn encouraged villagers to protect their investment.³⁴ This became apparent not only by the increased numbers of Vietnamese willing to enlist or otherwise give support to local militia or paramilitary organizations, but also by the increased flow of information from the peasant population.³⁵ Even as early as 1967, before the Air Force civic action effort really got off the ground, there is record that the Office of Security Investigations at several air bases was working regularly with intelligence sources contacted initially through Air Force civic action personnel. And by that early date also, the civic action programs at Tan Son Nhut and Pleiku had become integral parts of their bases' Perimeter Military Defenses System, with civic action personnel participating in all meetings.³⁶ On one occasion, the Seventh Air Force security police director noted that the USAF program had a "direct impact on

the security/defense postures of USAF installations within the RVN [Republic of Vietnam]." As an example, he cited the experiences at one installation which had problems with occasional sniper fire directed at a road heavily traveled by USAF personnel. After an intensive program was established in the villages and hamlets along the roadway, the sniper activity ceased.³⁷ The flow of information from the South Vietnamese increased considerably as the pace of the civic action program picked up.³⁸ This was especially true, for example, in the hamlets adjoining Da Nang. The rural areas around Da Nang Air Base had never been models of security. The population was overtly hostile at times; at best, communications were strained and peasants would display an apathetic attitude and silent hostility toward military personnel and government officials. Very little usable information was gathered, and travel in the district was hazardous. It was apparent that fear of Viet Cong reprisal for even minor demonstrations of pro-government sympathy held the areas inhabitants in a firm grip.

Before 1968, the Seventh Air Force had not put much time or effort into pacifying the region. The civic action effort was low-key and not well-organized. The enemy's 1968 Tet offensive, however, served to turn this situation around. Tet was considered a particularly critical period—a time when neither Americans nor South Vietnamese officials were certain how the rural population would interpret the Viet Cong onslaught or the government's response. But just at the time when civic action might have played a decisive role in convincing the people in outlying areas to side with the legal government, military volunteers—if they were allowed off base at all—had to spend their time in the city of Da Nang itself, transporting food, caring for the injured, or settling refugees.

When the emergencies stemming from the guerrilla assault on the city had been taken care of, the civic action office on base embarked on an aggressive developmental program for the area's neglected rural population. This was undertaken as a part of the government's stepped-up pacification efforts. By August, the Air Force program was operating at full speed, with the base civic action officer overseeing many useful projects in a number of the nearby communities. By this time also, beneficial results were becoming increasingly more obvious. Besides the improved economic situation which accompanied the increased developmental activity, one of the most noticeable changes occurred in the peasants' attitudes. The villagers became much more friendly, the children greeted American passersby, and hamlet residents, in many small ways, began taking American civic action workers and Vietnamese revolutionary development personnel into their confidence. As the following events indicate, this increased trust finally paid a big dividend. By sharing information on Viet Cong activity with these pacification workers, Da Nang's defenders were alerted of a well-planned communist attack on the city and were thereby able to forestall a possible disaster.

The amount of intelligence data collected from the communities surrounding Da Nang began to increase significantly in August 1968. The Seventh Air Force attributed much of this increase to its developmental program. American civic action personnel, for example, had been working extensively for several months in the hamlet of Con Dau. Numerous homes, which had been previously destroyed were rebuilt, and projects to reconstruct the school complex and to install a new irrigation system were well underway. The Americans were supervising the projects; Vietnamese revolutionary development workers were helping the people with the actual work and

at the same time serving as a local police force. On August 15, several of the beneficiaries of these undertakings disclosed the names of two Viet Cong who were working undercover in the adjoining hamlet of Trung Luong. That night the revolutionary development team captured the two men, one of whom named nine more Viet Cong working in the same hamlet. Revolutionary development workers arrested these the next day as well, and in the process discovered that they had formed the principal Viet Cong infrastructure for the hamlet. The hamlet chief himself was among those captured. He had been a frequent participant in the areas monthly meetings to coordinate revolutionary development activities. USAF civic action personnel who had met with him on numerous occasions remembered his enthusiasm for their proposals but were unimpressed with his follow-through,

Following the arrests, two American revolutionary development advisors flew in from Hoi An to take the captors back with them for interrogation, But when a jurisdictional dispute broke out between the two Americans and several Vietnamese Army personnel over who should have custody of the prisoners, the civic action personnel attached to the 366th Tactical Fighter Wing on base volunteered to take them to district headquarters, En route, the Air Force officers learned that the prisoners had plans in their possession for an assault on Da Nang itself, scheduled for August 22. The plans were very complete, with details of mortar and rocket positions as well as attack routes. The civic action officers promptly turned the information over to the base intelligence office.

Over the following few days, civic action workers picked up various other bits of evidence pointing to the fact that the Viet Cong did indeed plan to attack the city on August 22. Two days before the suspected assault, for instance, the village chief of Hoa Da Village asked the base civic action officer for ammunition for a .38 caliber weapon he was wearing. This was the first time the chief had been observed with a weapon. He had certainly never asked for ammunition. "It was apparent that the village chief feared for his life but was unable to tell us directly," the officer recalled. The ammunition was provided, and again the information was passed on to the intelligence personnel on base, One day before the suspected assault, civic action personnel noticed a distinct increase in the volume of Vietnamese traffic over a bridge leading into Da Nang. The rate was about three times the normal flow and was composed largely of women and children on foot or in buses. The civic action workers knew the route well, They had crossed Cam Le Bridge on Highway 1 every day to get to the hamlets where they worked. Their interpretation of this increased traffic was that the villagers knew that an attack was imminent and that the women and children were moving to safer locations. Again, the base intelligence agency was notified.

On the night of August 22, North Vietnamese and Viet Cong units moved into position in the hamlets bordering Highway 1. At approximately three o'clock the next morning, they launched attacks against Cam Le Bridge, Marine units stationed in Hoa Tho Village, the Hoa Van district headquarters compound, and certain parts of the city of Da Nang. The Marines and South Vietnamese Army units were waiting for the attackers, however. And although the fighting was fierce, American and South Vietnamese casualties were few. The enemy lost 155 men who were killed in the fighting around the bridge and in Hoa Tho Village, The bulk of the battle was over after two days, The Viet Cong and North Vietnamese had not achieved one single objective. The Seventh Air Force attributed a large part of the allied success to the

seven-day advance notice the civic action office was able to give based on the information its officers had received from the people.

Even after the fighting had started, these same civic workers continued to collect useful information. When they reestablished contact with the village chief who was residing in Con Dau Hamlet, for example, they were told of the hiding place of the remnant of a Viet Cong battalion. These guerrillas were searched out and destroyed. Thus, in this particular instance, the civic action effort helped not only to forecast an enemy attack against a major South Vietnamese city but to aid the allied counteroffensive as well.³⁹

The environs of Da Nang remained a hotbed of communist activity throughout the 1960s, and the general insecurity of the area continued to make it risky for the peasants to inform on the Viet Cong or to openly demonstrate their allegiance to the Saigon government. But as the Air Force's civic action program matured and expanded, evidence continued to accumulate, pointing to the fact that popular loyalties were solidifying in favor of the legal governments. Lieutenant Colonel (then Captain) Joseph P. Conrad took over the civic action job at Da Nang the following year, in February 1969. It was still "tantamount to suicide for the peasants to turn in the Viet Cong directly," Conrad recalled, but the men in his office soon learned to act on even the subtlest of hints. A child, for instance, might suggest visiting an out-of-the way area. Follow-up action by intelligence gathering nets might reveal a large stock of weapons or of rice. In one instance, a youngster turned in a clue that led Conrad to a cache of weapons less than an eighth of a mile from Da Nang. All the weaponry was wrapped in waterproof containers and stored underwater. There was no physical evidence that the weapons were there. On other occasions, Colonel Conrad would be told not to go to a certain hamlet on a certain day. From experience, he knew the Viet Cong would be expecting him at that time. "We finally learned not to brush aside any clues—no matter how small. Not all the clues turned up worthwhile information. But more often than not there was something there we needed to know about," Conrad said. When questioned about the difficulty in proving a direct correlation between civic action and such bits of unsolicited intelligence, Conrad answered confidently, that it was not hard to see a relationship. "Previously we had no favorable communication with those people. They were providing us nothing and, in fact, giving us a hard time. Civic action helped us to make inroads and win their confidence. But only after we had developed some meaningful dialogue with them, did we feel that they were helping us."⁴⁰

Maj. Emil Yatsko, who headed the civic action office at Bien Hoa in 1971 and 1972, reported much the same response. The only difference was that the data was given more frequently and more overtly. Yatsko recalled that many times (and at some places, most of the time) civic action personnel who went out and mixed with the people were spontaneously given much valuable information. When they acted on the advice, they were often able to confirm or deny suspected enemy movements, prevent personal attacks on numerous individuals who had been targeted by the Viet Cong, and uncover a wealth of hidden weapons and ammunition. On occasion, the information civic workers were able to obtain piecemeal from the peasantry would allow intelligence teams to identify communists who were posing as village chiefs or who held other leadership positions in the community.⁴¹ As soon as these individuals were removed and prosecuted, the village would usually become much more secure and the villagers much more free in their affections and liberal with the information

they shared.⁴² In one hamlet where extensive civic action efforts were underway, the entire Viet Cong infrastructure was denounced by the inhabitants and captured by local forces. In this case, as had happened earlier at Da Nang, the civic action officers actually transported the prisoners to the appropriate authorities. In all such instances, the information the people supplied was unsolicited.⁴³

The medical civic action program was particularly successful in initiating relationships between the people and the government that would eventually yield important intelligence information. Often, USAF medical teams worked in isolated rural areas where the people had only negative experiences with government authorities.

The primary mission of the medical teams under these circumstances became not so much that of administering medical treatment as that affecting as a catalyst to introduce the government to the people. The medical team would be able to draw a crowd together initially and put the people in a receptive mood. But while the doctors held sick call, government agents would also be at work. Agricultural experts, for example, might explain improved methods of growing rice and political teams might distribute educational materials or show movies. After this initial contact had been made and if follow-up visits by government teams were continued on a regular basis thereafter, the ultimate result would be a permanent bond of friendship between the two groups and an outpouring of information on subversive activities in the area.⁴⁴

The experience of Maj. Philip R. Choates, a USAF flight surgeon who spent three years in South Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand working on various medical civic action projects, illustrated this principle at work. According to Dr. Choates, the people in one area where he worked had previously had very little to do with government officials. They would see a tax collector periodically, and on occasion the police would make sweeps through the area in search of suspected communists or bandits. The government could convict only a few of those it apprehended, however, because the people refused to testify against them. But after the introduction of medical civic action teams, and accompanying security forces, the conviction rate for apprehended communists jumped to eighty percent. "The people were less afraid," Choates explained. "In the past if they testified, they were almost certain to be assassinated."⁴⁵ As civic action began to be more widely used by the other services, very similar situations developed.⁴⁶ From the following statement, it is evident that General Walt had, in fact, more than a "gut feeling" about the usefulness of civic action:

To those of us who saw the suffering of the Vietnamese people, benevolence was its own reward, but it was more: it was a weapon against the guerrilla that he could not use himself without unacceptable risk.... The response [of the Vietnamese people] was not immediate, but it also grew, as the children warned us of booby traps, the women showed us where the rice was stored for the Viet Cong, the elders told us when the Viet Cong would come to collect their taxes or hold their next meeting. Sometimes it was a guarded communication, I remember when a young Naval doctor told us that the villagers had warned him against his next visit—to come not on the scheduled day but the day after. No mention of the Viet Cong, but the message was clear.⁴⁷

The ability of civic action personnel to gain the trust of a peasant population and thereby to increase the military's intelligence collecting potential can be documented

further by the fact that it was not confined to Vietnam nor monopolized by Americans. In the late 1950s when the Draper committee was collecting evidence to support the need for increased American civic action, the panel cited numerous instances in Korea, Burma, the Philippines, and Laos where participation of indigenous military forces in social and economic activities had enhanced the gathering of intelligence data.⁴⁸ France had also capitalized on the same phenomenon in its pacification program for Indochina during the 1950s. The Commander-in-Chief of French forces there noted that successful completion of "pacification should be evidenced by the people themselves reporting to the authorities whatever rebel elements remain among them." And in his recitation of lessons the French garnered—perhaps too late—from their experiences in Vietnam, he cited the account which one French army major gave of his successful civic action program:

With the people and the local leaders, I invited their confidence. They themselves finally were the ones who gave me information. I procured seed and fertilizer for them, and I saw to their delivery. I sold their wood for them, and urged them to join in using rice paddies which lay fallow. In 1953, I helped them sell at a good price 400 tons of surplus rice, this being their first surplus crop since 1945. I repaired Provincial Road No. 19, had three bridges rebuilt, and turned them over to the villagers. I reestablished communications, and despite the risks, I authorized resumption of the motor sampan service.... Thus the economy was restored. In two years my area had once again become rich: 25,000 inhabitants instead of 5,000; new and clean villages, one of which had been given my name. Since January 1, 1954, security was complete in my district.⁴⁹

It appears, then, that years before American civic action personnel began making similar claims for their program, the French had already found civic action to be an effective vehicle for collecting information from the people and a useful tool in achieving the ultimate goal of security for the country. In summing up his appraisal, the French commander noted that civic action did work. When the people become voluntary informers, he said, a government can know assuredly that it has the support of its people. But the year these lessons supposedly were learned was 1954.⁵⁰

Aside from the easily observable social and economic benefits, the increased popular interest in self-help, self-government, and self-protection, and the not so easily documented by-products of expanded government control and greater intelligence-sharing inclinations on the part of the populace, additional evidence exists to suggest that military civic action was successful in achieving its objectives. One of the more obvious indications was the reaction it evoked from the Viet Cong. Captured enemy documents, communist radio broadcasts, articles published in North Vietnamese newspapers, and stories relayed by insurgents who defected indicate that North Vietnamese and Viet Cong leaders were deeply concerned about the increasing effectiveness of allied civic action. These sources reveal that communist leadership was aware of the utility of an effective civic action program in forming political loyalties. They also show that leaders worried about the erosion of their influence in areas where such programs were in force and that in several cases they attributed the departure of large numbers of people from Viet Cong-controlled areas, to successful

allied civic action programs. One document, captured in late 1966, for example, discussed the psychological impact of an American medical team on a group of peasants: "The enemy behaved kindly to the people to win their heart. They carried the people's children in their arms, washed and changed their clothes.... They assigned medics to be on duty day and night to treat the sick when it was necessary." The document complained that the local populace seemed to like this attention. More significantly, many people openly compared allied medical aid with that provided by Viet Cong village civil health teams, concluding that allied treatment was far better.⁵¹

In a second document, captured during this same period, the Viet Cong complained that the allies had "succeeded in influencing" the people through civic action. Many villagers came away with the impression that "the Americans were lovable." A third document, originating from Duc Hue District in Hau Nghia Province, and dating also from late 1966, discussed forthcoming rice production requirements for Viet Cong-controlled areas of Duc Hue. In so doing, it disclosed that fifty percent of the population of the area had left for government-controlled districts. Of those who left, ten percent had settled permanently in "enemy areas," while the remainder traveled frequently between the two locations.⁵²

As allied interest in pacification picked up, so did communist determination to counter it. In April 1967, on the same day that Ambassador Lodge announced that pacification would be a key element in allied strategy to end the war, a communist radio broadcast carried orders from the Viet Cong high command that all civic teams were to be wiped out.⁵³ And in 1971, a series of articles published in the North Vietnamese Army's daily newspaper, *Quan Doi Nhan Dan*, expressed resentment over the growing impact of the "very insidious" rural development program. President Nixon was accused of resorting to "economic and political tricks" to win over the civilian population. And civic action projects were cited for creating a "false prosperity ... in the hope of making the people lose sight of the patriotic struggle."⁵⁴

Given such pronouncements, the allies, then, were aware of Viet Cong antipathy toward the pacification program, and they expected resistance. The ceaseless campaign of murder and the intensity of the terrorization drive with which the program was greeted, however, came as a surprise.⁵⁵ "Unfortunately,, you could always gage your effectiveness on the amount of money which exchanged hands if you got killed," recalled major Yatsko, the Bien Hoa based civic action officer. "Civic actions officers seemed to enjoy quite a bit of royalty in this area" he said. "Some officers I knew had a million piasters on their heads. I don't think the Viet Cong ever had more than 50,000 piasters placed on mine; so I never made the big times, but then I was in Vietnam for only four months."⁵⁶

Although no USAF civic action worker was killed on the job, almost everyone who went out and built up a good working relationship with the peasant became a target of the Viet Cong. One American civilian—Joseph B. Smith, the Military Assistance Command's senior advisor in Quang Nam Province who oversaw all the Air Force civic action projects in the Da Nang area—was blown up in a refugee camp just north of the air base. The Viet Cong set a mine in the road specifically for him, "The communists wanted him because Joe was an effective guy," Lieutenant Colonel Conrad remarked. "That was a measure of success. If you were really doing your job, they knew you."⁵⁷

For security reasons, base commanders in some areas were extremely reluctant to allow their civic action people to travel off base as much as their jobs required. Yatsko

recalled that his first commander at Bien Hoa flatly refused him permission initially. After several confrontations over the issue, Yatsko finally convinced the colonel to allow him access to some areas. The commander eventually relented completely, when the base civic actions office helped the security police stop an intrusion attempt on two separate occasions.⁵⁸

In areas under strongly, Viet Cong influence, civic action officers were always armed for protection. They often had to conceal their weapons, however, to demonstrate trust in the people and to establish a better relationship with them. Many times this outward display of trust preserved their lives. Major Yatsko recalled one ploy which worked very well for him. Whenever he planned to spend the night in the field, he would travel very ostensibly armed with an M-16 rifle and a .38-caliber pistol—the Air Force standard issue. But he would also keep a 9mm pistol concealed in a shoulder strap in his armpit. He would then ask the villagers whether he could spend the night with them. When they assured him he would be safe, he would take off his weapons—except for the concealed one—and hang them in a central place in the village. The message was obvious: he was depending entirely on the villagers for protection. "Every time I did that, I was never bothered," the officer remembered, "I would get up in the morning and my weapon would be there." Sometimes, however, the village people would be a little uneasy about his presence. If he received cues that they were very busy or that it might be better if he were to return at some later time, he would always leave immediately. "The implication was that if you didn't get out soon, you were probably going to get yourself shot," Yatsko said.⁵⁹

Americans were not the only ones singled out for harassment and assassination, South Vietnamese noncombat units that worked directly with the people also became prime targets for Viet Cong attacks. Because there were more Vietnamese engaged in such activities, though, and because these men often worked in some of the more insecure areas, they sustained many more casualties than the Americans. And as the pacification program began to make significant inroads into previously Viet Cong - dominated areas of the countryside, the number of executions mounted.⁶⁰ Whereas in 1969, national police statistics showed an average of 207 terrorist incidents a week, by mid-1970 the figure had crept up to 290—a 40 percent increase.⁶¹ Although these figures included other government officials who had become Viet Cong victims in addition to the revolutionary development personnel, pacification workers always made up a large percentage of the total.⁶²

In addition to attacking the personnel composing civil development teams, the communists often turned their fury as well on the projects themselves. Through experience, civic action officers found less sophisticated equipment was often the solution to such types of harassment. In one instance, teams sent out by CORDS erected a water filtration plant in a little village about ten kilometers north of Bien Hoa Air Base. The villagers had suffered for years from illnesses caused by using the impure water they got directly from the river nearby. The people from CORDS, however, could never get the project to work because rebel elements ensconced in an island across the river continually sabotaged the electrical generator which ran the pump. An Air Force civic action team from the base finally hit upon a solution when they substituted a manual pump, operated by a man on a stationary bicycle, for the electrical one and gave the villagers a few pointers on self-defense. The filtration plant was then made into a village-controlled monopoly. The villagers elected a local resident to operate the bicycle and set the prices he could charge. The operator had

a definite income, the well was kept full of clean water, the health of the villagers improved significantly, and political sentiments formed in the government's favor. Communist harassment continued until the rebels were finally cleared from the island, but the villagers knew how to fix a bicycle. And except for the annoyance and inconvenience the guerrillas caused, they could not stop the water from flowing for long.⁶³

Guerrilla attacks on civic projects was also one reason that Seventh Air Force civic action officers came to insist on peasant participation on as many projects as possible. Personal involvement by the peasant gave him a stake in an undertaking and a reason for protecting it. Moreover, the Viet Cong tended to be more reluctant to destroy projects closely identified with the peasantry—probably because they realized that such terrorist tactics were self-defeating and would alienate the people.⁶⁴ One captured enemy document, for example, had the Viet Cong admitting that their "mistakes" with the people had cost them much in the way of popular support.⁶⁵ Yet, it was not uncommon for insurgents to dress themselves in the attire of the revolutionary development cadre, go into a village where the government teams had been working, and literally wreck the village, murdering townspeople and destroying civic projects the people had built with their own hands. Since the villagers thought government workers were responsible, revolutionary development teams dared not set foot in the village again. This gave the Viet Cong a free hand. They could then dispatch their own civic teams to rescue the people from the "hostile" government forces. When such episodes occurred, it became almost impossible for the government to reestablish rapport with that segment of the population.⁶⁶

Even though the communists realized that such acts of violence could backfire and that wantonly arresting and killing people without a proper motive often built up a backlash of hostility which was difficult to reverse, the terrorist drive against civic teams and their projects continued. The reason was plain. Were civic action teams to succeed in winning enough popular support for the government, they would eliminate the conditions on which the guerrilla battered, undercut his ability to enlist new recruits, encourage villagers to report his movements, and in a score of other ways, make the countryside a less favorable place for his operations.⁶⁷

Historically, efforts by the government and its military forces to improve the lot of the peasant had been a threat to the Viet Minh. While the French were still in Vietnam, the Viet Minh never concealed the fact that one of the principal objectives of their guerrilla war was to undermine the government's pacification efforts. One French medical officer who was taken prisoner later reported, "The Viet Minh told me on several occasions that they had no enemy more dangerous than a doctor who treated the people."⁶⁸ In the opinion of Marine Corps Commander, General Walt, civic activities represented a "deadly threat" to the Viet Cong as well—something they could not afford to let continue.⁶⁹ The upsurge in the use of low-level, guerrilla warfare tactics could not have won the Viet Cong a decisive victory by itself. Yet resort to such measures did show the value the enemy placed on allied civic action, and it did demonstrate indirectly that the communists, out of desperation, reacted to destroy a program they believed influenced public opinion and encouraged the peasantry to side with the government in Saigon. And why should the farmers not support the side that was able to put money in their pockets? By 1972, it was the civic program of the allies that was providing security so crops could be harvested safely, building and keeping the roads and bridges open so the surplus could be gotten to market, and offering the

peasantry some public amenities for the piasters they paid in taxes. The Viet Cong could not compete in these areas. Their hostile reaction should not have come as a surprise.

There is both direct and indirect evidence, then, that by the beginning of 1972, the Seventh Air Force civic action program had met with at least some degree of success. In fact, almost all the Air Force personnel involved with the program agreed that it was one of the most cost-effective programs in Vietnam. Remembering the consternation he felt in 1972 when he was asked to close down the USAF civic action program countrywide, Major Yatsko said, "Civic action was perhaps the most effective thing we had going in Vietnam. It wasn't much. It didn't involve much money, but it was the best for the buck we had going."⁷⁰ Lt. Col. Conrad also recalled having trouble understanding how the U. S. could withdraw its support from what was, in his estimation, "probably the only program that might have had a chance for success in South Vietnam—a program which might have made a change in the situation there but which failed because it was not understood."⁷¹

These comments, together with the available evidence, point out the positive effect civic action had on the war. They also make it necessary to pose the question of why, then, civic action remained a small and misunderstood portion of the Air Force effort. Public statements by high-ranking civilian and military leaders indicate that many of them also recognized the value of noncombat operations. And on numerous occasions Presidents Kennedy and Johnson announced their determination to use civic programs to "get at the roots of violence."⁷² Yet why, then, in 1969 (the costliest year of the war) did the United States spend only 6 percent (\$1.3 billion out of an estimated \$21.5 billion) of its Vietnamese war budget on the combined military and civil operations which made up the pacification program?⁷³ These figures become even more significant when it is remembered that by 1969 the pacification program had expanded tremendously over the efforts of previous years and had become a major component of allied declaratory strategy. And why, as another example, did the Americans find the term "winning of hearts and minds" (a term the British had considered descriptive and very respectable), ludicrous when it was used to describe allied counterinsurgency tactics in Vietnam—tactics that were in many instances identical to those the British had used so successfully in Malaya?⁷⁴

At least part of the answer to these questions can be found in the American approach to the Vietnam War. The United States arrived in Southeast Asia with virtually no recent combat experience with revolutionary movements (and none with Marxist revolution). American military personnel had practically no political experience and had shown little concern for the political nature of warfare. Psychological operations had played only an ancillary role in World War II and Korea. And although a precedent existed in Malaya and the Philippines for using nonmilitary tactics to counter active insurgent movements, the United States military had never employed such measures with that specific objective in mind.

On the other hand, the U.S. military was funded, trained, and equipped for employment in the traditional manner that American strategists, remembering World War II and Korea, had banked on the next war following the same conventional pattern—one in which superior technology and the ability to retaliate on a massive scale had determined the difference between victory and defeat. When the military found itself fighting a largely political war against guerrillas in the jungles of Southeast Asia, rather than against the Russians in central Europe, it was

understandably ill-prepared to respond in any way other than the conventional manner. Brigadier K. Hunt, Deputy Director of The London Institute for Strategic Studies, summed up the situation at a British seminar on Vietnam:

Whenever I have talked to the American military [in Vietnam] they have always seen this as a war against an enemy rather than for the people, and it was just not possible to get them to face the opposite way.... Their tendency is to opt for using fire-power, by and large that is their national style...they have the attitude that things are solvable militarily...provided you go about it the right way. It took a long time for most of them to begin to see this was a war for the people and had to be dealt with differently.⁷⁵

U.S. Ambassador Robert Komer, architect of the "new model" pacification plan, offered another explanation for American inertia in pursuing nonmilitary solutions to the Vietnam conflict. In his 1972 Rand Corporation study entitled *Bureaucracy Does Its Thing*, he noted that it was not in the American military's "organizational repertoire" to fight a war with unconventional or nonmilitary tactics. And being a large, complex, and cumbersome bureaucracy, the U.S. military establishment found the decade that it was actively involved in Southeast Asia too short a time to transition to the new unconventional tactics—like civic action—that were called for. "In an atypical situation that cried out for innovation and adaptation," Komer wrote:

a series of institutional constraints militated against them.... In true bureaucratic fashion, each U.S. and GVN agency preferred doing more of what it was already used to doing, rather than change accepted patterns of organization or operation. All this helps explain why the enormous direct U.S. contribution to the war—almost 550,000 troops at peak, thousands of aircraft, and over \$150 billion—had such limited impact for so long.⁷⁶

A similar conclusion was reached at a 1973 and 1974 colloquium held at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy to discuss the "Military Lessons of the Vietnamese War." "The central lesson which I draw from our military experience in Vietnam is that Vietnam was politics," Senator Stephen Young remarked at the conference. "How often we have expressed that sentiment, yet how rarely did we use it to determine policy and shape programs."⁷⁷ Gen. Edward Lansdale, who had retired from his behind-the-scenes role in Vietnam several years before, also participated in the colloquium. It was his opinion that the checks and balances of the American democratic system were partly to blame for this inertia. The principle of separation of powers dictated that political and military operations be kept separate and that the military stay out of the political process.⁷⁸ Lt. Col. William R. Corson—though not a participant in the seminar—had also found this to be a valid explanation of American uncertainty about unconventional warfare when he headed the Marine Corps' Combined Action Program (the Marine version of Air Force civic action). In his book *The Betrayal*, he later recorded a conversation with one Viet Cong defector who, after being rehabilitated, witnessed the economic and social change brought about by a U.S. civic action operation in 1966. The former guerrilla reportedly told Carson, "You now

have the guns and ideas to defeat the VC." But when asked if he thought the Americans would use them, he said, "No...because you are afraid to lose face by mixing the two."⁷⁹

Not only was the strategy of political warfare strange to Americans, but the terminology used to explain it was equally foreign to American ears. Before 1967, "pacification"—to those who had heard of the term—meant a program tried unsuccessfully by the French to retain their colonial position in Southeast Asia—not something to be taken seriously by Americans who had no territorial ambitions in the area. The term "civic action" was even more unfamiliar to most U.S. fighting men. Prior to American involvement in Vietnam, the only formal dealings Air Force personnel had with off-base populations were during emergency relief operations or other community service projects designed to improve the bases relations with the host population. To expect similar, nonmilitary programs to put down a communist-backed insurgency seemed deceptively simple. What possible good could an itinerant dentist (and a volunteer at that) accomplish when the people he treated had their lives threatened daily by armed terrorists? Was there any connection between the disease, hunger, and economic ills plaguing the Vietnamese people and the brutal war raging in the countryside? And if the answer to the latter question were positive, to what extent was the alleviation of these conditions an American military responsibility? Would such concerns not be more appropriately left to civilians?

Such, no doubt, were questions—and valid ones—which ran through the minds of Americans responsible for drafting a U.S. strategy for Vietnam, as well as those expected to carry out orders based on that strategy. In this light, it is relatively easy to see why there was a misunderstanding of the proper American role in Southeast Asia. And when this Misunderstanding was combined with a misconception about the nature of the war, an overconfidence in military solutions and a slow-to-adapt military bureaucracy, it is even more understandable that nonmilitary solutions were overshadowed by more conventional approaches. Thus, throughout the history of U.S. military involvement in Vietnam, civic action, and for that matter, the entire pacification effort—remained the "other war," which by implication was separate and apart from the "real war."

At this point it becomes necessary to ask another question: What impact did this misunderstanding and neglect of civic action have on the overall effectiveness of the Seventh Air Force program? Perhaps the most far-reaching impact was that it produced a general lack of command support for the effort. Major problems were encountered simply in getting the program off the ground. American military commanders in Vietnam had to be convinced that the strategy of pacification would work for them. They had to be prodded to arrive at this conclusion soon enough to have the strategy still remain valid. And then, they had to be encouraged to divert sufficient manpower and resources from the shooting war to allow civic action and the other components of pacification a reasonable chance for success.

Civic action advocates were never completely successful on any of these counts.⁸⁰ It was hard to get commanders to give their wholehearted support to a program that could produce few immediate or measurable results. Consequently, Air Force civic efforts through 1965 were largely humanitarian in nature and frequently led by the base chaplain. There were no provisions for country-wide command, control, or coordination. Only in 1966 did the Air Force officially assume the civic action mission and make any serious attempt to formalize a program for Vietnam. And not until 1968

was each of the base civic action offices, established two years earlier, fully manned and operating in accordance with some rudimentary plan. A headquarters-level Civic Action Division had been established at Tan Son Nhut by this time to formulate plans and programs, but there were no command lines between this office and the individual base civic action officers. Thus, almost all decisions about the program were made at the base level with the base commander as the key figure in determining how actively civic action would be pursued. While some base commanders gave aggressive, imaginative support, many others viewed civic action primarily as a giveaway program and gave it more lip service than real backing.⁸¹

Moreover, at eight of the ten bases where a USAF program existed, the civic action office was assigned to the combat support group. Air Force doctrine and regulations, however, did not consider civic action as having an operations function. Nation-building, improving the economic status of the country, and similar long-range objectives were usually listed as the goals of the program. Very little was said about short-term, combat oriented objectives (such as better air base security, an increased flow of information from the people, and improved air strike targeting) which an aggressive civic program could achieve in a specific target area.⁸² Consequently, the potential of civic action was never exploited to a full extent in these roles, and many combat-oriented commanders were never convinced of the program's utility.⁸³

Failure to sell the potential of civic action in a combat environment, then, accounted in part for the general feeling that the program was more relevant to ground forces than to the Air Force and that the barbed wire compounds encompassing the air bases in Vietnam offered more security to those installations than did a friendly countryside population.⁸⁴ And, to give another example, it was not until October 1968 that the Seventh Air Force established an interface between civic action personnel and USAF intelligence officers.⁸⁵ This oversight could be justified to some extent by the fact that USAF civic action officers had no training in the subtleties of intelligence gathering and could not be expected to develop such skills on their own in a completely foreign environment. Then too, tasking civic action personnel specifically with intelligence acquisition would have made it more difficult for them to carry out their primary function of developing the spontaneous trust of the population. Yet by not capitalizing on the intelligence collecting potential of civic action, many opportunities to generate information were no doubt lost.⁸⁶

When the objectives of civic action did not appear relevant and base commanders either showed no interest in the program or purposefully withheld their supports individual base civic action officers had difficulty carrying out their duties. One good example was that of off-base travel. The problems involved with getting permission to work off base have already been discussed. Once this authorization was obtained, however, civic action personnel occasionally found it even more difficult to secure adequate protection during their trips into hostile or semi-hostile territory to coordinate projects. Joseph Conrad, the civic action officer at Da Nang, for instance, worked off base for five months without the benefits of an escort vehicle or a permanently assigned radio transmitter to call for help if he ran into trouble. Base supply had several hundred radios in stock, but refused to give him one because it not on his list of allowable items. The base commander gave him no support. Conrad finally had to send a message to Seventh Air Force headquarters threatening to terminate all operations before he received a PRC-25 radio package.⁸⁷ "I didn't care about an allowance list," Conrad said. "The average airman on base was not trained

for combat. We were taking him into the field as a volunteer and had to provide him some measure of security. The Marine Corps provided that level of equipment for its people engaged in civic action. If a Marine was sent into the field, he got support. Didn't the Air Force guy deserve comparable treatment?⁸⁸

Lack of psychological support was hard on civic action officers as well. One base commander, for instance, felt his civic action officer could accomplish more as the base club officer than in his normal role. The civic action officer's refusal to go along with the switch was reflected in a very poor efficiency rating.⁸⁹ Without psychological support from the commander and the knowledge that their accomplishments were receiving appropriate recognition, civic action personnel occasionally experienced severe motivational problems. And the results showed up both in the prosecution of the program as well as in the frequently heard comment: "Nobody gets promoted or fired on civic action."⁹⁰ One civic action division chief spent a whole tour in Vietnam without once leaving his office at Tan Son Nhut to view firsthand the various base programs he was supposed to be monitoring. It is difficult to see how this particular officer could have accomplished very much.⁹¹ In all fairness, it must be added that poor morale was much more often the exception than the rule. Civic action officers as a whole were a highly motivated group who felt that, despite the lack of support they received, they were accomplishing much good. Most officers made a real effort to mix with the people, to learn the Vietnamese language, and to publicize the successes they experienced. They willingly worked overtime and frequently risked their lives to see a project to its completion. Almost every officer agreed that the year he spent in Vietnam doing civic action was the most rewarding one of his entire military career. Some even asked for re-assignment to the same position. And as far as volunteers to the program were concerned, civic work actually served as a morale-builder. Rather than worrying about sufficient help for a project, civic action officers had to be concerned instead with controlling the volunteers' numbers and enthusiasm.⁹²

Besides the lack of adequate command support, other problems stemming from a misunderstanding and misapplication of civic action also cut into the program's effectiveness. A significant factor was the absence of a countrywide master civic action plan, charging each echelon of the command with specific objectives. The Military Assistance Command's 1966 directive on civic action required little more than a loose coordination with Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support, and a monthly after-action report from each of the military units engaged in civic work.⁹³ The complications this lack of coordination created in the way of duplication and oversight, have already been discussed. And although the Air Force emphasized the value of comprehensive civic action planning, it never developed a concept of civic action that permitted an extensive or detailed operational plan. Considerable effort did, indeed, go into developing contingency civic action plans for each air base. But these were designed to take effect only in the event of an extended cease fire or during periods of reduced combat operations. Civic action clearly took the back seat in the Air Force concept of how the war should be fought.⁹⁴

The second class status of civic action was evident also in the area of supplies. Noncombat materials were often hard to come by because higher priority demands normally took precedence. It was exceptionally difficult, for instance, to purchase light construction materials since local civil engineering units, because of war-related requirements, had first priority. It was almost impossible to obtain lumber. These difficulties caused some eighty-nine percent of the civic action appropriated funds to

go unused in fiscal year 1969, despite numerous critical projects requested by local communities.⁹⁵ Civic action personnel even had an enormous amount of trouble obtaining authorization to use the excess and scrap materials that comprised the bulk of their construction supplies. And since civic action goods had to compete with war materiel for cargo space, transportation, too, became a problem of major proportions.⁹⁶

It is not necessary to reiterate in detail the problems caused by under manning and deficiencies in the training of personnel. Only two men at each base—had they had comprehensive pre-assignment training—could have comfortably handled little more than the administrative and logistical aspects of the program. At no one time did the USAF have more than twenty-four full-time civic action personnel in-country, and there were probably no more than one hundred assigned to that position during the entire course of the war. Requests for additional people were turned down due to undefined tactical requirements and manpower ceilings.⁹⁷ Yet, the Air Force insisted that civic action had a very important role in the war—one that was "second only to combat operations."⁹⁸ While it was indeed accurate to insist that civic action occupied a peripheral position in Air Force strategy, it would be difficult to argue that its role was considered important, given its general treatment.⁹⁹

Nor was training adequate for even the few personnel that were assigned to the civic action job. Because no prerequisite training program existed and because an officer could not curtail an assignment to allow for training, most Air Force officers either received no training at all or simply attended the ten-day course at Eglin, which taught them nothing about the language, geography, customs, or culture of Southeast Asia. Equally detrimental was the fact that no qualification training was available to the noncommissioned officer. Moreover, on-the-job training, at best, was a slow process, which did not improve significantly even with the belated introduction of a one-week overlap in tours.

But it was the depth of the civic action officer's intercultural awareness and his familiarity with the objectives of the military civic action program that dictated his success or failure on the job. When the American officer's ignorance of Vietnamese customs or national policies led to a poor working relationship with his Vietnamese Air Force counterpart—as it did much too often—the American would usually end up doing much of the work himself. This reaction, however, negated the primary mission of the civic action program—that of selling the principle of self-help to the Vietnamese. And, as a result, the progress of nation-building was often impaired.¹⁰⁰

In conclusion, then, there is evidence that the Seventh Air Force civic action program accomplished much good and that the Air Force community at large was in sympathy with the program's objectives. On the other hand, the Air Force missed many opportunities for positive action. Despite statistics showing the dozens of schools erected, the thousands of inoculations given, and the hundreds of other actions undertaken, the overall Air Force response was less than dynamic. It is perhaps a "statement of the obvious" that more command support, more supplies, and more and better trained personnel would have made for a more successful program. And while it is interesting to debate where primary blame should be placed for the Air Force's failure in this regard, a more important question is whether an earlier, larger, and more conscientious application of civic action techniques would have produced a significantly different outcome in Southeast Asia. Unfortunately, the answer to this question cannot be found in historical analysis and it must, therefore, remain one of those elusive historical "if's." Yet certainly, as Robert Komer noted in 1974, a purely

military approach to the war was not the solution. It is hard to see that more could have been lost by trying an alternative strategy.¹⁰¹

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Appendices

1. Cost of Civic Action Activities
2. Statistical Breakdown of Projects
3. USAF Medical Civic Action Program
4. Vietnamese Contributions—Labor and Materiel
5. Hamlet Evaluation System Trends, 1968
6. Infrastructure Neutralization, 1968

APPENDIX 1

COST OF USAF CIVIC ACTIVITIES

U.S. COSTS

<u>FUND</u>	<u>CY 1969</u>	<u>CY 1970</u>	<u>CY 1971(1st Qtr)</u>
Voluntary Contributions	\$109,204	\$ 95,341	\$ 20,401
Excess Materials	437,184	322,650	103,870
Psywar Fund (AIK)	80,517	21,487	4,089
O&M (Appropriated) Funds	<u>47,900</u>	<u>442,181</u>	<u>75,040</u>
	\$674,805	\$881,659	\$203,400

COST OF VIETNAMESE MATERIALS	PCT of Total
1969	\$103,064
1970	\$816,099
1971	\$208,546

TOTAL COST OF PROGRAMS (All Sources)	
1969	\$ 777,869
1970	\$ 1,697,758
1971	\$ 411,946

APPENDIX 2

STATISTICAL BREAKDOWN OF PROJECTS

<u>Category</u>	<u>CY 1969</u>	<u>CY 1970</u>	(1st Qtr) <u>CY 1971</u>
Education	372	974	258
Soc. Welfare	248	185	12
Health & Sanitation	202	338	106
Public Works	201	654	233
Youth Activities	171	134	44
Construction and Repairs	124	252	73
Village and Hamlet Administration	108	350	109
Agriculture and Animal Husbandry	78	125	35
Refugee	31	49	19
Chieu Hoi	16	74	36
Information*	<u>---</u>	<u>210</u>	<u>26</u>
	1551	3345	951

*Not kept separately in 1969

Appendix 3

USAF MEDICAL CIVIC ACTION PROGRAM

<u>Year</u>	<u>Medical</u>	<u>Dental</u>	<u>Immunizations</u>
1967	9,066	1,880	1,888
1968	125,518	39,112	63,080
1969	259,889	67,517	58,471
1970	107,568	59,707	22,178
1971	15,099	5,363	8,254

Appendix 4

VIETNAMESE CONTRIBUTIONS TO USAF MILITARY CIVIC ACTION PROGRAM

Labor (Pct of Total Man-days)			
<u>Month</u>	<u>CY 1969</u>	<u>CY 1970</u>	<u>CY 1971 (1st Qtr)</u>
January	85	85	97
February	72	80	95
March	72	76	96
April	61	90	--
May	68	91	--
June	69	93	--
July	82	93	--
August	82	96	--
September	79	97	--
October	77	97	--
November	70	97	--
December	70	90	--
Year Average	73.9	90.4	96

Material (Pct of Total Material)			
<u>Month</u>	<u>CY 1969</u>	<u>CY 1970</u>	<u>CY 1971 (1st Qtr)</u>
January	15	41	35
February	9	17	51
March	18	21	57
April	16	22	--
May	12	25	--
June	6	28	--
July	44	35	--
August	29	59	--
September	24	53	--
October	19	52	--
November	25	60	--
December	23	70	--
Year Average	20	40.3	47.7

Appendix 5

HAMLET EVALUATION SYSTEM TRENDS DURING 1968 ACCELERATED PACIFICATION CAMPAIGN

TOTAL POPULATION (PERCENT)

	<u>OCT</u>	<u>NOV</u>	<u>DEC</u>
Relatively Secure	69.8	73.3	76.3
Contested	14.9	13.3	11.4
VC Controlled	15.3	13.4	12.3

RURAL POPULATION (PERCENT)

	<u>OCT</u>	<u>NOV</u>	<u>DEC</u>
Relatively Secure	55.5	60.7	65.0
Contested	20.8	18.7	16.1
VC Controlled	23.7	20.6	18.9

SOURCE: USMACV Quarterly Evaluation, Oct-Dec 1968, pp 71-72.

Appendix 6

INFRASTRUCTURE NEUTRALIZATIONS DURING ACCELERATED PACIFICATION CAMPAIGN

	<u>KIA</u>	<u>CAPTURED</u>	<u>RALLIED</u>	<u>OTHER</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
OCT	253	835	241	130	1,459
NOV	397	1,297	362	282	2,338
DEC	<u>427</u>	<u>1,205</u>	<u>471</u>	<u>269</u>	<u>2,372</u>
TOTAL	1,077	3,337	1,074	681	6,169

SOURCE: USMACV Quarterly Evaluation, Oct-Dec 1968, p 75.